

After all this time,



I still miss you,
everyday.

After All This Time by ImObviouslyCrazy

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Summary: It had been seven years since Eleven vanished with the monster. Everyone moved on, for the most part, but not Mike. He stayed in Hawkins, refusing to leave for college like Dustin and Lucas. He stayed for Will and for the ever lingering hope that one day he would find her again. Just as he is starting to make a life for himself, Eleven comes home. Older now, too, and scared.

1. Chapter 1

Chapter 1:

Mike yelped as he stubbed his toe on one of the many boxes scattered around his new apartment. It was a shabby little thing, but it was plenty for him since he was the only one going to be living there. He let out a low curse, then used his injured foot to push the box out of the middle of the hallway so he wouldn't kick it again later.

He made his way into the living room, groaning and sighing heavily as he dreaded going to work. His job wasn't awful, but Mike still hated getting out of bed for it anyways. All he did all day was answer the phone for Hopper and the rest of the PD, and it got rather dull at times, since not many things happened in Hawkins, not after all that mess seven years ago.

His heart always ached a little when he thought about it. About the girl he had gotten so close to when he was younger. After everything, he hoped his life would have gone back to normal, like it was before, but no one could really be normal, no one that knew anyways. Will was sick, haunted by the upside down and its strange connection to him. He could never escape it, and it only got worse as the years went on until he stayed home with his mom all day and night.

Dustin and Lucas moved away, to go to college together. They begged and pleaded for Mike to go with them, but something would always tether Mike to Hawkins. It was a hope that was long dead and gone, but still had a grip on the deepest parts of his heart. For a few years, he kept hoping shed come back, that Eleven would show up one night in the woods like she had before. As he got older, he realized it didn't work that way. She was gone. For good.

Mike couldn't stay around his parents, though, so he moved out. His mom tried her best to get him to be the old Mike, the happy kid who liked Dungeons and Dragons and rode bikes with his friends all day. And he tried. He really did. But it was nearly impossible for him to pretend for long that his little heart had been ripped from his chest right in front of him when Eleven took on that monster and vanished with it.

As he got older, the pain got easier, but Mike was, at his core, bitter and lonely, a shell of the person he could have become if Eleven never sacrificed herself.

The phone rang, and Mike hurried over to answer it, hoping it was his boss telling him that the other dispatcher had finally come back from Puerto Rico, and he would have the day off. But when he picked up the phone, it was Will on the other side.

"Mike, buddy?" His voice had depended with puberty, but it also became raspy over time as the Upside Down ravaged his mind and body. The poor kid had held on for seven years, and if Will could survive what he was dealing with, Mike figured he could survive the ache in his chest.

"Yeah, I'm here. How's it going, Will?" Mike asked his friend, hating how quiet and sickly Will sounded on the other end of the line. There was a cough.

"I've seen better days. And worse. I was wondering if you had plans tonight. I thought maybe we could spend the night together in Castle Byers like old times. It's been rebuilt."

"Probably too small for us, Will the Wise."

"Not anymore. Come on over. It's been awhile, and Johnathan is out of town. Mom's driving me nuts. I need a break." It almost sounded like Will was begging, which made telling him no impossible. Mike sighed.

"Alright, I'll come over after work, okay?"

"Hopper told mom you werent working."

"What? He never told me. Son of a bitch never calls me when I'm off." He rolled his eyes at the lack of communication between him and Hopper, mainly because Hopper never bothered to tell him anything. "Alright, let me get some work done here, I guess, then I'll head over."

"See you soon, Mike. Thanks for coming." He coughed, and Mike cringed a little.

"Anytime, buddy." He hung up the phone a little reluctantly, wishing there was something more he could do for Will. But he didn't know anything about the Upside Down, or how to fix Will. He shook his head, then walked back to his bedroom. Mike flopped back down on the bed, and before long, had dozed back off.

"Mike!" A familiar voice, one that was different but somehow easily recognizable startled him awake. Mike sat upright in his bed, sweat beading on his forehead. He looked around, but there was no one. His apartment was empty and quiet, and the voice felt like it had been part of a dream or a memory. But it was so loud it woke him. He shook his head, reminding himself that she was gone, that it was impossible, that it had been seven years. It sounded like her, but it was just a dream. It had to be. El was never coming back.

He glanced over at the clock, then groaned and threw the covers off of himself. He hadn't actually gotten anything accomplished at the house, but it didn't matter. Mike needed to go on and head over to Will's. After climbing out of bed, he moved to his box of clothes and threw on a white tee shirt and jeans. He pulled on a beige jacket, then snatched his keys from the dresser and headed for the door.

The drive to Will's was short, since everything seemed to be close together in Hawkins due to how small the town was and had always been. It barely grew or changed at all in seven years, and it was a little disappointing at times. All of these other towns surrounding them were growing and picking up new food chains and entertainment all the time. But Hawkins was stagnant.

When Mike pulled into the driveway, Will was already sitting on the porch. He stood up, holding a blanket around himself, when Mike got out of the car. A big grin grew on his face, but Mike couldn't mirror it. Will looked sickly, pale and shivering, eyes dark and heavy-lidded. He was thin, too, even thinner than usual. It made Mike want to kick something and cry.

"Mike, man, you made it," Will beamed, despite his physical limitations, he trotted down the steps and met Mike halfway to the door, leaving the blanket he had around himself on the chair on the porch. Mike grabbed Will and pulled him into a hug, resting his chin

on Will's shoulder.

"Wouldn't have missed it for the world, Will," he told his friend, trying not to squeeze too hard.

"Mike, I need to tell you something," Will said, pulling away from him. Mike raised an eyebrow. "There's something I think you should see. Something weird." Mike shook his head, more than confused, so Will just took him by the arm. "Just come with me."

Will led Mike out to the woods behind his house, out to where Johnathan had rebuilt Castle Byers for Will a year ago. He hadn't used it much, but the nostalgia made him go out there a few nights ago, and he was more than surprised to find out that it wasn't entirely empty.

There was a single light, a small blue plastic lantern, in the little fort, battery powered and bright. It was sitting on the ground in the center, and Will quickly climbed in to sit along the back of it. Mike bent down and crawled in behind him, sitting to the side. He looked down at the light, then up at Will.

"What's going on?" He asked.

"Hey, you still there?" Will called out. He turned off the light and looked at Mike. "Give it a second."

"You messin' with ghosts, Will? That's not very wise of you."

"Shut up, I'm being serious," Will frowned. "It's not a ghost. It's a person." He turned his attention back to the turned off lantern sitting on the ground. The light flickered, then blinked, briefly lighting up the little fort. Mike's eyebrows furrowed. "Mike's here," Will said out loud, and suddenly the light burned even brighter, holding for a moment before turning off again. Will looked over at Mike and smiled. "I think it's her."

"It can't be."

"Mike, it has to be. Who else in the Upside Down has a weird obsession with you? No one. It's got to be your girl."

"Shut up," Mike said again, staring down at the light, that familiar aching in his chest returning after so long of being gone. He wanted to scream out for her, but he didn't even know if it was her.

"Blink once for yes, twice for no," Will said down at the light. "Can you do that?" It blinked once. He grinned. "You're her, aren't you? Eleven." It blinked, and Mike wanted to cry all of a sudden. His eyes welled with tears. "Are you close?" Blink. "Are you okay?" Blink. Blink. Will's smile faded. "Can you find your way back?" Blink.

"Then come back!" Mike shouted, sitting up quickly. "Come back, El, what're you doing?! Come back, please!" Tears fell down his cheeks, making Will frown even more. Blink, blink. "No? What do you mean no? El, just come home! It's been so long!" The light went out, and it stayed out. "El?" Darkness, nothing, no response at all. The air felt colder, the woods quieter. "No, no, no." Mike flew out of the fort, rushing into the woods. "El, get back here! Don't leave me again, Eleven!" He shouted and he ran through the woods. "EL! ELEVEN! COME BACK!"

A rustle in the bushes caught his attention, making him turn around. "El?"

"Mike," a soft voice came from behind him. He whipped around, whole body going rigid as he looked at the girl in front of him. Dirty, faded pink fabric was tied around her chest and waist, leaving her stomach, arms, and legs bare. She had shoulder-length, wavy brown hair, but that innocence in her eyes was unmistakable. "Not safe."

"El? Is it really you?" He asked, stepped closer. She had changed, gotten older, but then again so had he. He still had shaggy black hair and big, bright eyes, but his features were more defined, and he was taller, more toned. Still thin, but reasonably so. He stepped closer again, and she took a step back.

"Not safe," she said again, frowning at him. "Mike."

"Not safe? For me or for you?" He asked her, trying to step closer. Eleven took another step back, eyes watering and pleading. "El, please."

"Please," she repeated, shaking her head. "Not safe, Mike." She pointed at herself, then at Mike. "Not safe." There was a low, guttural growl in the distance, and Mike's stomach knotted up instantly. "Monster," she said after a minute. "Comes for me."

"For you? El, what's going on?"

"Upside Down," she told him. "I stay. It stays. I come. It comes."

"I don't care, El, don't go back there!" He shouted, and she flinched. She looked like hell. Her hair that had grown was tangled and messy, her face was dirtied with blood and black stuff, and the fabric covering her intimate parts was frayed and faded. "Please, come home. We can fight that thing together."

"Not safe, Mike. Please."

"El!" He snapped, desperate and panicking, not wanting to lose sight of her again. "Seven years, El. You can't leave me for seven years, show up, then try to leave again. I can't let you go. Not again. Please El, don't leave me," he begged her. Eleven looked around, then her eyes widened when she heard another growl.

"Come." She rushed to Mike, grabbing his hand in hers. "Come, Mike." She took off running, back towards Will and his house, holding onto Mike as she did. A thousand and one thoughts ran through his mind, but all of them wanted her to stay, whatever trouble it meant for them. Seven years. And she was finally home.

2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2:

Will stared out of the back window of Mike's car as they sped out of his driveway. He'd elected to sit in the back seat so he could keep his blanket wrapped around him. Without it, he would get awfully cold and suffer from fits of severe chills. Whatever the Upside Down did to him, it never got any better, only worse. Some days, it let up a little, it was easier to handle. Others, it crippled him.

Mike was shaking in the front seat, his hands trembling on the steering wheel. He occasionally glanced over at Eleven, who sat in the passenger's seat, staring out of the window. There were so many things he wanted to say, to ask, and to express. He wanted to tell her how lonely he'd been, how much he'd missed her. But words failed him.

"I should call Mom when we get to your place," Will said, breaking the unbearable silence. Eleven turned her attention back to Will, offering a small smile that Will mirrored. Mike watched her, then took a deep breath.

"Almost there," he told the both of them. Mike felt like he was in a dream, one he'd had so many times after she left. The impact she made on him was astronomical, and it only made the loss of her that much more debilitating. He was a kid then, and he'd watched her give up everything to save him. He both loved and hated her for it.

"Home?" Eleven asked him, her big eyes lighting up a little.

"Uh... Yeah. Just... not the same place. New home," he told her, frowning a little. She had wanted to go home, but he didn't live there anymore. He had to take them to his apartment. His mother didn't know about Eleven, about what he lost seven years ago. She saw the change, but she never knew the reason he was so different.

"Mike is home," she smiled to herself, sitting back against the seat, her eyes closing. Will chuckled from the back, then coughed and chuckled some more. Mike's cheeks flushed, but he couldn't pretend

he didn't appreciate the comment. She hadn't forgotten him either. Not at all. It made him feel a little better about holding on for as long as he did.

"Here," Mike cleared his throat, parking his car outside of the little townhouse he'd rented out. Eleven didn't look impressed, but she eagerly climbed out of the car and headed towards the door, her hair bouncing around as she did. That was new to Mike, but not unwelcome. He stayed behind to help Will out of the car, then led the sickly boy into the house with Eleven on his other side.

"Messy," Eleven said immediately, eyes flicking around the piles of boxes in the living room and hallway. Mike let out a sigh, then moved Will to the couch. He shoved the boxes to the wall, out of the way, then walked to Eleven.

"Hungry?" He asked her.

"Eggs."

"Fortunately for you, I always keep a box in the freezer." He smiled a little, and it only grew when he saw Eleven beam happily, her cheeks lightly flushed. "Come on. Will, you want anything?"

"I'm fine, Mike. Get her some food." Will laid down on the couch with his blanket, starting to warm up a bit. Eleven followed Mike into the kitchen, and she sat at the table, her hands wringing together anxiously in her lap. Mike noticed.

"You alright?"

"Worried," she told him, bringing up a hand to tuck a stray hair away before dropping it into her lap again. Her smile had faded, and her eyes glazed over with something fearful. Or sorrowful. Or both. Mike stuck the eggs in the toaster, then moved to sit beside her at the table. Eleven dropped her gaze to her lap to avoid his.

"El, what happened to you?" Mike asked her, keeping his voice soft and gentle. She cringed at the question, her hands gripping each other tightly. "Talk to me, El, so I can help you. Please."

"No," she shook her head, her hair falling loose again and blocking

her face from his sight. He leaned back in his seat and exhaled slowly. "Doesn't matter."

"It matters, El."

"No, I'm home," she said, her voice a little more desperate. She looked up at him, tears dripping down her dirty cheeks. "Monster... took me." She didn't want to talk about it, that was obvious, but Mike had to know. He'd wanted to know for so long, and he just couldn't wait. "When it died. I went." Her nails dug into the tops of her hands. "Dark and cold... Trapped." With a shake of her head, she explained, "I stayed. It stayed. I left... it followed."

"It's following you?"

"Yes," she nodded. "Not same. Different. But still monster."

"There's more than one?" He scoffed. "So the first one did die, but there was more? In the Upside Down?" He was pushing her, and it only made her start to tremble. Her hands were bleeding now. Eleven nodded frantically, then jolted up from her seat, the toaster popping at the same time. She hurried out to snatch up the eggos, immediately dropping them and yelping.

"Hot!" She exclaimed, looking back at Mike. "Too hot." She waited for a moment, then picked them up again, taking a bite from one of them. "I'm here," she said, turning towards him. He noticed the blood on her hands, and he just nodded, not wanting to push anymore. Mike stood and grabbed her free hand, walking her to the sink.

"Let me help you with that," he said as he flipped on the faucet and held her hand underneath, the little lines of blood were rinsed away, and he let her grab the eggos with her clean hand before rinsing off the other one, too. Eleven seemed to have relaxed a little; the shaking stopped entirely. "Better now?"

"Better." She stared down at her hand for a moment, then moved back into the living area. Mike followed along behind her. "Will. Sick?" She wondered, eyes flicking back to Mike, who nodded his response again for lack of the proper words to explain.

"Upside Down... never really let's go," Will spoke up from the couch, bringing her attention back to him. "Well, for us regular folk anyways," he grinned a little. "I've heard a lot about you, Eleven. Nice to finally meet you."

"We've met."

"Not really," Will shrugged. "I don't remember much those last few days. It's all... blurry. I don't remember you."

"Oh," was all she could think to say. She felt like she knew Will, after searching and reaching out to him so many times in the past, and even after, when she found her way back to his house in the Upside Down. She took a bite from her eggo.

"Will, why don't you go take a nap in my room?" Mike suggested, seeing how tired and weak he seemed. The boy looked at Mike, then nodded and pushed himself up from the sofa. He nodded towards Eleven, then walked back to Mike's room. "He's not been great, El."

"Sorry," she finished off her eggo, brushing her hand on the pale pink cloth tied around her waist. Mike made a face,

"We should probably get you some new clothes, huh?" He leaned down and grabbed her wrist, pulling her towards the other side of the living room where he had a box of clothes. "And you can take a bath. A normal bath. Remember how to do that?"

"No. Too long." She shook her head at him, then reached into the box to excitedly snatch up a familiar yellow tee shirt. It was the one that the man gave her when she first escaped. The man that Papa killed. It was clean now, and it smelled like Mike.

"I never wore it," he quickly clarified. "Just never really wanted to get rid of it. Felt wrong." Eleven rubbed her thumbs over the soft fabric in her hands, smiling down at it.

"Mike," she said his name, then lifted her eyes to his. "I'm sorry. I left... alone. You were sad. My fault..." Her smile faded, and that look of sadness washed over her again. Mike reached up instinctively and rubbed his hand over her hair. Like he was petting her head

affectionately.

"I understand," he told her, offering a sweet smile. "Don't worry about it, El. You were protecting me. All of us. Even though I missed you like crazy... I understand." A tear slipped down her cheek, then she rushed to him, arms and circling around his waist. Her cheek pressed into his chest as she squeezed him.

"I missed you."

"Well, you're back now," he told her, "so it'll be alright. Come on, now, I'll run you a bath." He put an arm around her shoulder and led her into the bathroom. He turned on the warm water and set the plug. When he stood up to leave, Eleven caught him by the sleeve.

"Stay, Mike."

"El, it's a bath. You're supposed to have privacy."

"Mike," she whined his name, desperation in her eyes. "Stay." He looked at her, then at the bathtub. He didn't really feel like explaining to her why he couldn't stay in the bathroom with her. While she was older, she retained a lot of the innocence she vanished with. He took a deep breath, then nodded, moving back to turn the tub water off since it had gotten full.

"I'm going to turn around then, while you get undressed." He turned his back to her, and Eleven started to pry the dirty cloth from around her chest. She slid out of the makeshift skirt, then climbed into the tub and pulled her legs up to her chest.

"Mike."

"Yeah?" He turned back, and his cheeks lit up. But he also felt like he was going to be sick. Her skin was dirty, but as the water hit it and cleared some of it out of the way, he could see cuts and bruises. Mike walked to the edge of the bathtub and knelt down. "Eleven, what happened to you in there? How did you get hurt?" He asked her, though he was sure she'd respond with the same vagueness she did before. He was right; she just shook her head at him. "El, please."

"Monster," she told him with a shrug of her shoulders. "Claws. Teeth.

I was asleep." She looked down at the water and used her hand to rub away some of the crusted mug on her knees and shins. Mike sat there for a moment, then he sucked in a deep breath.

"It attacked you while you were sleeping?"

"I was hurt," she said softly, her eyes glazing over with water. "And scared."

"I got it," he nodded, not wanting to push her any further. Mike never liked pressing her for information, and as kids, he rarely ever asked her anything. But after seven years of wondering, thinking about what could have happened to her, he just had to know. Then, seeing her in such a broken and beaten state didn't help. "You don't have to say anymore, El. Just get cleaned up. You can use my shampoo and body wash, but you'll smell like me."

"I like it," she told him, reaching over curiously to grab a bottle of the shampoo he was talking about. She popped the top loose and brought it closer to her nose. She smiled. "Smells like you." Mike nodded, but didn't really say anything else. He sat by the edge of the tub, eyes scanning over the bruises and scratches on her shoulders and legs. However, when she dropped her legs, Mike quickly turned back around and pressed his back into the side of the tub so he couldn't see her anymore.

"Just use that, El," he said, regarding the shampoo. "Use it for your hair." Eleven reached up to grab a piece of her hair between her fingers, then tipped the shampoo over and dropped a few drops onto it. Then, she just stared at it.

"I don't remember. What do I do?" Eleven asked Mike, blinking up at the back of his head. He sighed heavily, shoulders slumping in defeat. He turned back to her again, trying to keep his eyes on hers, or at least above her shoulders. He cupped water in his hands, bringing it up and dumping it over her hair until it was wet enough to wash. Eleven sat perfectly still, letting him do whatever he wanted. Every bit of trust she could give was given to Mike. Her loyalty and faith in him was unquestioned and unparalleled.

"Just take a handful of this," he said, squeezing a pile of shampoo into

his palm, "and you rub it in really good." He moved slow, but eventually put his hands in her hair, cheeks still burning. He tried to be gentle, though her hair was extremely tangled, and she winced every now and then when he hit a particularly stubborn tangle. He leaned over the edge of the tub, ignoring everything but her hair and face. It was the only thing he could do. Eleven needed him to stop being embarrassed and help her get clean, so that's what he was going to do.

"Okay, now you have to lay back," he told her, once all of her hair had been covered and lathered with shampoo. She looked up at him, eyebrows furrowing with concern. "I'll be quick. Don't use your powers or anything. Just lay back so I can get all the shampoo out." She hesitated, grabbing the edges of the tub as she started to lower herself backwards. Mike put his hands on her shoulders gently, leading her back into the water. "I won't let anything happen to you, El. There's no one to look for. Stay out of the dark."

"Okay..." She let him push her back into the water, but she flinched when her ears were submerged. Her eyes stayed wide and focused on Mike above her, though he was already getting to work on washing out the shampoo. She watched with admiration as his jaw tightened, and his eyes stayed centered on her hair, like he was afraid to look anywhere else. Eleven wasn't sure why, but she didn't question him.

It only took a couple of minutes to finish washing her hair, and he took her shoulders and brought her back up, eyes briefly glancing down at her bare torso. Mike quickly turned his head away, then sat back again.

"You can wash the rest, right?" He asked her. "Just... get all the dirt off. You can use body wash, but you don't have to since it might hurt your cuts and stuff."

"Don't leave."

"I'll sit right here."

It didn't take long for Eleven to finish washing up. Mike, keeping his back to her, grabbed a towel from under the sink and handed it backwards to Eleven. She took it and started rubbing it over her skin

to dry off. She stepped out of the tub and handed it back to him. His cheeks heated up all over again, and he quickly took the towel and wrapped it around her body to cover her. Then, he went to get her shirt, and he brought it back for her to put on. Luckily, it was still long enough to cover her entire torso and half of her thighs, leaving the rest bare. Mike felt a little better now that she was dressed.

"Better, El?"

She nodded. "Better."

"How about you get some rest? Will's sleeping in my room, so you can take the couch, if you want."

"No sleep." She shook her head. "Nightmares." Mike thought for a moment, then sighed.

"What if I lay down with you?" El's eyes lit up,

"Okay."

Mike walked with her back into the living room, flicking on the TV and flopping down on the couch. Eleven laid down, stretched out the length of the sofa, with her head on Mike's thigh. She watched the TV for a moment, surprised that it looked so much different from what she had seen before. After a little while, she fell asleep, comfortable, practically purring under Mike's hand that kept brushing over her shoulder ever so gently. She finally felt safe, and warm, and she could relax. It certainly didn't hurt that the only smell surrounding her was that of Mike, and it brought her a comfort like he wouldn't believe.

Hey guys! Hope you enjoy the story so far :) The first chapters are a little slow because it's just getting El back into the swing of things, but it will pick up for sure! If ya like it, please leave a review so I know you're enjoying it! That's usually how I decide whether or not to continue with the story lol Thanks again!

3. Chapter 3

Chapter 3:

Mike hadn't slept much that night at all. He stayed up, looking after Eleven like a silent guardian as she got some rest. He was worried if he dozed off, or closed his eyes at all, she'd disappear all over again. He wasn't sure he could handle losing her all over again, not after he just got her back in his life again. He had to make sure she stayed.

Eleven started to stir a several hours later, a frown etched in her lips and she squirmed. She let out a few soft whimpers, body shifting repeatedly like she was uncomfortable or afraid. Mike didn't know what else to do, so he grabbed her shoulder and shook her lightly.

"El. Eleven, come on, wake up. You're dreaming." He shook her again, and she jerked upright, the top of her head hitting Mike's chin. He winced and moved his face away, rubbing the bottom of his chin lightly with his hand. "You alright, El?" She blinked, looked around, then turned to Mike.

"I forgot I was here," she told him, sitting back with her legs crossed and her hands in her lap. "Bad dream... I was in the Upside Down."

"Well. You're not there anymore," he told her, dropping his hand back onto the arm of the sofa. He turned towards her. "You're here now, El. With me and Will."

"Dustin and Lucas?" Eleven asked, her wavy brown hair a little messy from sleeping on his lap. She looked cute like that, tired and hair a little messy. Mike smiled, unable to help himself, and he turned his attention back to the TV for a moment.

"They moved away. To go to college. To school." The screen started to go fuzzy, so Mike got up and moved the antennas on top of the television until the picture cleared up again. Eleven stared at the long metal rods for a moment, then tore her gaze away, afraid to be connected at all to the Upside Down in fear that the monster would find her even easier.

"Do they know?" She asked him. "About me." Mike moved back until he could sit back on the sofa, and he shook his head. "Why?"

"Haven't called yet. I'll talk to them today. Okay? We need to run to the store and get groceries and clothes for you first. You can pick out some things you like. To wear, I mean." He chuckled a little. "You're going to need more than a tee shirt."

"Girl clothes?" Eleven wondered.

"Yeah, girl clothes. Pretty things. Whatever you want, El." He grinned over at her when her face lit up at the idea. She opened her mouth to thank him, but suddenly they heard Will shout from the bedroom.

"Mike!" He called, and Mike jumped up quickly, running to the bedroom. He stopped at the door when he saw Will trembling violently on the bed as the lights flickered repeatedly all over the room, from the lamp, to the closet light, to the TV, back to the lamp again. Will's eyes were wide and frightened. Mike rushed to him, grabbing him quickly and shouldering his weight as he led Will out of the room.

Eleven met them by the sofa, and she hurried along behind them as Mike helped Will run towards the door. The lights in the hall flickered, then in the living room, then the kitchen. Eleven rushed to Mike, grabbing onto his arm.

"Go, Mike. Go." The door flung open before anyone could touch it, and Mike immediately looked back to Eleven. Blood dripped from her nose, but there was nothing to do about it at the moment, so he snatched up his jacket and keys, and the blanket from the couch, then the trio ran out to the car, getting Will into the back, and the other two in the front seats.

Mike sped off again, looking back at his house as all of the lights shut off again. They needed to be somewhere else, probably best in public. But first he needed to get Will to someone who could take care of him and keep him safe. As much as Will wanted to stay with Mike, to help him and Eleven figure things out, Will knew he wasn't strong enough anymore to help.

Mike stopped the car in the parking lot of the police station, leaving Eleven in the passenger seat as he got Will out and rushed him up to the door. Hopper was there in the front office, and he immediately came out to help Will.

"Take care of him, Hop," Mike said, hurrying back to the door.

"Wheeler, hold on," Hopper called to him. "You gonna tell me what the hell is going on?"

"Eleven is back," he said, panting heavily as he yanked open the door to the station. "She's not the only thing that came back. Look after him, Hopper. Closely. Don't let him out of your sight. And if something happens, you call me or Joyce."

Hopper knew that it was serious when he heard Mike say her name, the little girl with the powers that saved Hawkins so many years ago. He stared in shock, then nodded to Mike. He put an arm around Will and walked him back to his office, blanket and all.

Mike didn't stop the car again until he got into town. Now was as good a time as any to get the things they needed. He stopped at the clothing store first, since they rushed out before he could give Eleven anything else to wear other than her tee shirt. While it was long enough to be a slinky dress, he knew that people were going to stare. Not that it would bother El at all, which was all that mattered.

He took her by the hand, walking with her into the store. Eleven looked around at all the racks of clothes once they were inside, smiling to herself.

"Mike Wheeler," a girl's voice called from behind the counter. Mike turned to see Cathy, a girl he'd gone to school with and had a small fling with several months earlier. It didn't last long because Mike wasn't capable of giving everything to someone else when Eleven already had most of what he could have given.

"Cathy," he cleared his throat. He started in her direction, and Eleven quickly planted her feet and squeezed his hand. He looked back at her. "Go pick out some clothes, El. Its alright." Eleven shook her head

at him.

"No. Mike, come." She tugged at his hand, eyes flicking up to Cathy, who was staring intensely at Mike and Eleven both. She was smacking in gum, her green eyes twinkling with something Eleven didn't like, and her curly blonde hair put back in a bouncy high ponytail. She was pretty, and Eleven didn't like that either.

"You got yourself a new girlfriend now, Mike?" Cathy asked, raising an eyebrow as she leaned forwards on the counter. "Is that why you never bothered to call me back?"

"Cathy, now isn't a good time."

"Seemed to be a good time a couple months back. In fact, I remember you having a very good time." She smirked back at Eleven, who was frowning now, still holding onto Mike's hand. Eleven stared back, clearly unamused by the situation.

"Cathy please," Mike said, his voice low. "I just need to get her some clothes." He turned to walk away from Cathy, but she called out,

"Whenever you're ready to man up and come back to me, you're more than welcome, Wheeler." She pushed off of the counter, and Mike continued walking. Eleven lingered behind for a moment, and Cathy scoffed at her. "Can I help you?" She continued smacking on the gum bouncing between her teeth. Eleven blinked, and Cathy's gum slid down her throat, causing her to cough and gag for a moment until she managed to swallow it.

Mike came back and took Eleven by the arm when he realized what was happening. He pulled her away from the counter, but Eleven wasn't satisfied.

"Mouthbreather," she told the other girl, who had a hand on her chest, still coughing from the gum attack. Mike didn't want to smile, but amusement tugged at the corner of his lips anyways. He pulled Eleven away from the counter and back towards the women's clothes.

"You can't go using your powers on everyone you don't like," he told her, reaching up to wipe the blood away from her nose with the

sleeve if his jacket. She frowned for a moment, but it quickly faded when she saw a pink tank top with an intricate white design on it. She grabbed it, the fabric soft and smooth in her hands.

"This," she said, handing to Mike before quickly turning around to look at more of the clothes. She shuffled through the racks of women's clothes, grabbing anything she liked regardless of size. After Mike's arms got too full, he convinced her she had enough and that she should try on some of it. She nodded and followed him back to the dressing rooms. He set the stuff down inside for her, then closed the door, standing outside of it like a guard while she tried the clothes on.

Once they were done, and she had a few bags of things to wear, Mike led the way back to the car, tossing her stuff in the back seat, and driving down to the diner nearby. Eleven was dissatisfied with their lack of Eggo waffles, but she found something else to eat anyways. They sat across from each other in a booth, Eleven resting partially while Mike leaned back in the booth.

"Whos Cathy?" Eleven asked suddenly, catching Mike off guard. His cheeks flushed, and he looked over at Eleven with an incredibly guilty expression that made her stomach knot up for some reason. He took a deep breath.

"She was a friend. Well, more than a friend. Very briefly."

"You had... A good time?" She repeated the words of the cashier, not entirely sure what they meant in regard to Mike. His face only got redder, and he had to tear his gaze away from Eleven's.

"When you're older and you're with someone you like, as more than a friend, there are certain things you can do together that... are mutually enjoyable. Most of the time, anyways."

"Like..." She pointed at her lips, "What happened before." He looked at her for a moment as he racked his brain for what she meant. When he realized what she was referring to, his whole face lit up.

"Oh! Yeah, like that. Along with other things." He didn't want to give her the birds and the bees talk. He already felt like his face was going

to melt off from the embarrassment he already felt. However, the blush faded pretty quickly when Eleven looked down into her lap sadly. Mike grimaced. "El?"

"Cathy is... More than a friend. To Mike."

"No, no, no, El, she's not. Maybe once, for a second, but she was way too dull for me," he told her, smiling a little. Eleven looked up at him, and she smiled, too. "Not nearly as pretty as you, either. She was definitely a mouthbreather."

"Mouthbreather," Eleven nodded, the sadness gone almost as quickly as it came. He was relieved to see her calmed now, and fully dressed in that pink tank top and a white skirt Mike snatched up for her. She looked like a regular girl, not that Mike wanted her to be regular at all. Cathy was dull. Every girl he met after Eleven seemed dull.

After they got something to eat, Mike figured it was time to go back to the house. Without Will there, he felt a little more comfortable waiting around to see what was there, if it was the monster or not. It wasn't likely that someone else was in the Upside Down, but he didn't want to jump to conclusions too quickly.

He stood up, tossing down a couple dollars for a tip, and he started towards the door, Eleven trailing behind him. He paused as someone came through the door, and he stopped completely when he realized who it was.

"Dustin?" He blinked up at his long time friend. He was taller now, burlier, with a full set of teeth and the same long curly hair that poke out from under a baseball cap.

"Mike!" Dustin beamed. "I was wondering where the hell you were." He pulled Mike into a quick hug, then put his hands on his shoulders and pushed him back so he could look at his face directly. "Will said you weren't home. Didn't know where you went."

"Been crazy," Mike told him honestly. He glanced back at Eleven, who was grinning up at Dustin. Dustin looked back at her, and it didn't take long to recognize those big bright eyes. He stared at her for a moment, then looked back at Mike.

"What the hell?"

"She came back," Mike said, grabbing onto her hand and pulling her forwards so Dustin could see her. "But she didn't come back alone, Dustin. There's more than one Demagorgon." His friends eyes widened, and he looked down at Eleven.

"I'm gone for a year and everything goes to hell," Dustin shook his head. "Guess we got some work to do, don't we."

"Guess so," Mike nodded.

Thanks for the reviews you guys! I'm glad people are reading and enjoying the story! Hope you like this chapter and let me know what you guys would like to see in upcoming chapters :)

4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4:

Dustin walked into Mike's house first, not hesitating, and not afraid. They had faced the Demigorgon once before, and they had won, mostly because of Eleven's help. But now they were older and smarter, stronger, too. Dustin was sure that together, with Eleven back, they could find a way to take down the monster that terrorized them all those years ago.

"Nice place, Mike," Dustin said to his friend as he shuffled through the door. Mike stepped into the living room, shedding his jacket and tossing it onto a kitchen chair to his right. Dustin turned back to look at him, and he noticed Eleven wasn't right behind him. "Where'd our favorite mutant go?" Mike turned around, too, surprised she wasn't there like she had been before.

"El?" Mike walked back onto the porch, and just caught a glimpse of her as she started heading for the woods. "Eleven? Hey." He trotted around the building to catch up with her. "What're you doing? Where are you going?"

"Woods."

"Why?" He rushed a little to catch up to her, grabbing her wrist and tugging her back a little. "You can't go out there alone, its not safe." Eleven paused, looking back at him. He was obviously concerned, worried about her safety. She had missed having someone looking out for her. Seven years in the Upside Down almost made her forget what it was like. Almost.

"Its okay. Its scared." She let him hold onto her wrist, eyes flicking down to where he hand was wrapped around it. She didn't try to pull away, or to free herself, and his grip was loose and gentle. Mike made a face.

"Scared? Of what?"

"Me," she answered bluntly. "What I do. Only attacks when I sleep."

She waited patiently until he dropped his hand away. "Safer for me. Not you." She reached up and put a hand on his chest. "Go back, Mike."

"Come with me," he told her, eyes fixated on hers, though her attention was on the way her palm flattened against his chest. She looked deep in thought, but her cheeks flushed a little. "Come on, El, its not safe for anyone to be alone." She sighed, pulling her hand away and letting it fall to her side. She knew why he was worried.

"Just a minute. I won't leave." Eleven knew that Mike was worried she'd disappear again, but she wouldn't go back to the Upside Down even if she could. "Just wait, Mike." She turned again, walking to the woods. Mike let out a long sigh, but he trusted her. If Eleven said she wouldn't leave, then she wouldn't. Friends don't lie. She learned that a long time ago. And Mike knew how seriously she took that concept, as circumstantial as it was.

She walked a little ways into the woods, then stopped and glanced back over her shoulder. Mike had knocked on the back door, and Dustin opened it for him. Even though Mike stepped inside his apartment, he left the door open just in case, and for some reason that made Eleven smile.

Eleven had missed the woods, the real woods, not the dark, terrifying forest she was lost in for so long in the Upside Down. The woods behind Mikes house were full and pretty, thick with leaves and other plants littering the forest floor. She started heading deeper into the woods when she heard a twig snap. Her body tensed and her head jerked to one side, then the other. Even though she was free now, that she was back, her fear and paranoia hadn't faded much.

Eleven took a few more steps, then she was suddenly grabbed by arms that weren't familiar to her at all. She immediately started to focus on tossing the stranger away, but a sharp, blinding pain broke her focus. She screamed, then fell to the ground immediately.

"Welcome back, you little bitch," a voice she barely recognized said from behind her. She tried to sit up, but that burning pain still spread from her side. After laying a hand over where it hurt, Eleven pulled it back only to see crimson liquid on her palm and fingers. "Didn't think

you'd ever show your face around here again. But I guess you just couldn't stay away from frogface."

"Mike!" She called out in a panic, holding her hand over the wound. Her gaze fell on the sharp piece of silver glinting in the light that the boy held in his hand. "MIKE!"

"Shut up!" He kicked her. "Come on. Don't you have superpowers? Where's the weirdo we know?" He kicked her again. Eleven stared, trying to focus, and she managed to get the knife to fly from his hand, landing only a few feet away, but her focus was broken by the pain. She felt the familiar drip of blood from her nose.

Troy took another step towards her, but he stopped when he heard footsteps approaching rapidly from behind him. By the time he turned around, Mike was already there. He threw his body into Troy, taking him to the ground with him. Troy was caught off guard, which gave Mike time to land a few punches before Troy kicked him off.

"What the hell did you do?!" Mike shouted, rolling until he was back on top of Troy, pinning him, throwing a few more punches into his face. "You bastard! What did you do?!"

"Mike," Eleven whimpered, getting his attention. Mike threw one last punch, then hurried over to her, kneeling down to take a look at the damage. There was a tear right through the side of her brand new pink tank top, the one she really liked. Blood stained the fabric around the tear. He was panicking, barely able to breathe as he tried to figure out what to do.

"She ruined my life, Wheeler!" Troy yelled from behind him, though the boy was in too much pain, and too dizzy to get up again. Blood spilled from his mouth and nose. "She broke my arm, and I couldn't play anything ever again. She made me a laughing stock. She's a monster."

Dustin came jogging up to the scene, panting heavily,

"I called Hopper. He's sending an ambulance out to get her."

"Don't move, El. Okay? Just keep pressure on it." He had laid his own hand over hers, pressing down on to the wound, even though she was crying and wincing from the pain.

"How'd you know she was here?" Dustin asked Troy, towering over the smaller boy.

"Guess your little girlfriend pissed off your ex. She called me. Told me you called her Eleven, and that she was with you again. I knew you'd bring her here." He coughed, spit up some blood, then grinned up at Dustin. "I hope she dies. Better for everyone that way."

Eleven felt Mike jerk quickly in the other boy's direction, so she latched onto his shirt with her free hand, holding him back, pulling him closer to her.

"No, Mike. No more." She laid back against the leaves and the dirt, too tired and dizzy to say much more. Dustin could take care of Troy if he tried to run. He wasn't going anywhere, and the bully of a brat ruined his own life by making sure not playing sports was the least of his worries. He'd probably be going to prison.

"El, why didn't you kill him? Ive seen you do it. Why didnt you do anything?" Mike demanded to know, holding his hand down over her wound again. She shook her head up at him, like wrong of him to even ask her that.

"I don't want to be a monster," she said softly, glancing over at Troy. "I dont want... to be taken away. I want to stay."

"I won't let anyone or anything take you away," he told her.

"Promise?"

"Promise." He reached up to push her hair away from her face. "Just lay back, relax. Help is coming." She nodded, then let her head fall back into the leaves again, closing her eyes and taking a few deep breaths. Mike stayed by her side until the medics pushed him aside, and even then, he followed her to the ambulance and rode with her, sitting to her right, holding onto her hand though she lost consciousness on the way.

Eleven woke a couple hours later, lying on a soft hospital bed. She would have panicked if she hadn't seen Mike out of the corner of her eye. He was laying on the side of the bed by her waist, head resting on his arms as he dozed softly. Eleven smiled, despite the situation and the pain in her side when she sat up, she smiled.

"Mike?" She said his name quietly, reaching over and burying her fingers in his shaggy black hair. He groaned, then sat up, rubbing his eye.

"El. You're awake." He ran his hands down his face, then leaned forwards again, resting his elbows on the edge of the bed. "How are you feeling?" She didn't answer immediately. Her eyes drifted around the room, then fell on a case filled with an assortment of pretty colorful flowers. Mike followed her gaze. "Will dropped those off for you."

"Will?" She seemed a little surprised.

"You're his friend," Mike explained. "He was worried. Dustin was, too. And Hop and Joyce." She reached over and touched his hair again, enjoying the way it felt against her palm. Mike blushed, of course, and cursed himself internally for always getting so embarrassed by things. He wasn't smooth when it came to her.

"Soft," she said after a moment, dropping her hand away from his hair. She reached up to touch hers, but it was dryer, more coarse from the damage it suffered it in Upside Down, the lack of care it received there. She frowned.

"It'll get better, El. Its not a big deal," he chuckled, shaking his head. "So, you're okay?" Eleven nodded her response, then pulled the blanket back. She lifted the gown, which made Mike panic and look the other way, and she inspected the bandages for a moment before dropping the gown again.

"Mike. Why won't you look?" She wondered. "Unless I'm dressed. You wont look at me." The expression on her face led Mike to believe that it upset her, and that she thought it meant there was something wrong with her. Mike sighed,

"It's because I'm... Well you're more than my friend. And it makes me... attracted to you. I like the way you look a whole lot, El. But your... your body is special to you, and its... I don't know... something to be cherished. Its yours to see, and the only other person who should see is someone you really really like. Someone you love." It was the only way her could think to explain it to her, and his cheeks were burning hotly.

"So then Mike should look," she stated like it was so obvious. Mike stared at her, a little surprised at first, then smiled.

"Maybe another time, El."

"I get to see yours, too?"

"One step at a time, El," he laughed, squeezing her hand. "Lets get you all better, and solve this monster problem. Then I'll give you the birds and the bees talk, okay?"

"I don't like bees. But I like birds."

"No. I don't... Never mind. I'll explain later." He grinned up at her, amused by her naivety and innocence, though those qualities were what held him back from holding her tightly, from kissing her passionately, and from looking when he had the opportunity to before and now. He wanted badly to see her, to see all of her and her beauty. She grown into a woman, and Mike was a man. But part of Eleven was stuck as a child. So Mike would wait, would be patient. Because he had to. It just didn't feel right.

Yay! Thanks for the reviews again. :D they make my day and ive been having some bad days. Hope you enjoyed the chapter, and Troy isnt gone yet ;) Let me know if you like it so far and if there's anything you wanna see happen :) thanks, lovelies!

5. Chapter 5

You guys are seriously awesome :) I adore the reviews ive been getting. Theyre thoughtful and helpful, which isn't always the case for other stories I've written. So thanks! Hope you enjoy this chapter :) keep letting me know what you think!

Chapter 5:

Eleven had climbed out of her hospital bed, moving over to the large window to her right. She peeled back the dusty blue curtains and looked down at the parking lot. Mike had gone down to meet with Hopper, to talk about what happened with Troy. She could see them. Hopper was leaned back against his squad car, parked almost directly in front of the door. Mike was standing in front of him, and she could only see the top of his shaggy hair, not his face.

A knock pulled her attention to the door of the hospital room. She jumped a little, startled, but quickly relaxed when Will and Dustin came in. Will looked better than he had when she first saw him, though he was clearly still sick.

"Lucas is coming home. He told me to tell you he was glad you're back," Dustin told her as they made their way into the room. Eleven nodded at him, smiling half-heartedly, though she stayed close to the window.

"How're you doing?" Will asked her.

"Better," she told him quietly, glancing back down at Mike and Hopper. It looked like Mike was heading back inside which made her feel better. "Will." She looked back at him. "How are you?" The sickly boy shook his head at her,

"Don't worry about me, El." He hadn't gotten to know her very well before, but the boys spoke fondly of her, so he felt like he knew a lot about her already. "I'm doing okay." Mike came through the door a few minutes later, and Eleven seem to brighten up with his presence. It didn't bother Dustin. She always had a connection with Mike that

she didnt have with the others.

"Hopper said Troy's gone," Mike told the group, and Eleven's smile faded a bit. "They don't know how. He was in his cell last night, and today, he's gone. The door wasnt open or anything."

"Sounds like the Demogorgon for sure," Dustin commented, and Will nodded in agreement, having been captured by the monster before. Eleven thought about it, but she wasn't so sure. The monster had no reason to go after Troy, especially if it was circling and following her.

"How do we fight it? El took it down before, but you lost her in the process," Will said, though everyone in the room was thinking it. Mike's expression saddened astronomically at the thought of her being lost again. Eleven walked over to him, and she took his hand in hers. Dustin and Will exchanged glances, both grinning a little.

"I'm staying," she told him confidentially. "Promise." Mike took a deep breath, and he forced himself to perk up a little.

"Let's just worry about getting you out of here," he told her.

"Mom's calling me," Will coughed, looking down the hall. Dustin walked with him out of the room, leaving Mike and Eleven alone for the moment. Eleven walked back to the window. She laid her hand over her side where she was stabbed, and it definitely didn't hurt as bad anymore.

"You doing okay?" Mike asked. Eleven looked back at him and nodded. "Well, maybe you should get back in bed. Just in case. You have to take it easy for awhile, El." He pulled back the blankets on the bed for her, and she climbed in them. However, she moved to the side of the bed, and she patted the empty space beside her. "It'll be awfully crowded," Mike joked.

"Please," she asked seriously, moving her hand to leave the spot empty. Mike hesitated for a moment, but the desperation on her face made him give in. He carefully climbed into the bed beside her, staying above the blankets to make himself feel better. Eleven turned on her side facing him, and she slowly laid her head down on his chest, like she, too, was reluctant.

Mike snakes his arm around her to get comfortable, and she instantly sank into him like his body was made to fit hers right there against his side. Her hand grabbed a handful of his shirt, and she clung to him like he was her lifeline, the only one she still had.

"El, are you okay?"

"Scared," she admitted, her voice quiet and somber. He sighed, and her head rose and fell with his chest. Mike stared up at the ceiling,

"Me, too, El." It wasn't a lie. Mike had no idea what was going to happen in the days coming up. The only thing he cared about was making sure Eleven was safe, and that she didn't go anywhere ever again. After everything, he didn't think he could withstand the pain of losing her again, not without losing the majority of himself along with her.

His arm instinctively tightened around her, hugging her closer to his side. He was so deep in thought, he hardly noticed her doze off on his chest. She had been so comfortable, she couldn't help it. He smiled to himself, hand rubbing up and down her upper arm slowly, gently, like a soft, mindless caress.

Mike also eventually dozed off, unable to stay awake any longer. He'd been struggling to sleep for days, and he was finally comfortable and confident that Eleven was okay. He sank down into the bed a little further, Eleven still right at his side, head on his chest, and he dozed off.

Nancy had a bag of magazines and picture books hanging from her arm as she made her way down the hallway of the hospital. Mike called her and asked her to bring some things from when she was a bit younger for Eleven to look at and kill time with while she was under surveillance. Nancy didn't mind. She didn't have a use for them anymore, since she was older now.

Her feet instinctively halted when she saw a familiar figure hunched over by a vending machine down the hall. Nancy's stomach twisted nervously. She hadn't talked to Johnathan much at all since she got engaged to Steve. He obviously disagreed with her decision, and

Nancy, at the time, was insulted by his frustration.

Now, as the wedding approached, Nancy just wanted to make friends with him again. Part of her was still unsure if she wanted to be tied to Steve for the rest of her life. Johnathan had said something to her years ago that still echoed in her head every time her engagement to Steve was brought up, or whenever the wedding was mentioned.

Johnathan retrieved his drink from the tray of the vending machine, then stood upright again. He got a glimpse of Nancy out of the corner of his eye in her loose fitting sweater and black skirt. She was standing perfectly still, eyes wide and focused on him.

"Don't look so surprised to see me. Its not like we haven't been living in the same town all our lives," he rolled his eyes at her, a slight smirk growing on his face. Nancy blushed, dropping her gaze to the floor. "I had to bring Will up here. He wanted to see Eleven."

"Yeah, I know, I guess I just... forget he doesnt drive himself." She blushed and dropped her gaze to the floor. "You're looking well," she said impulsively, then immediately kicked herself for saying something so stupid and random. Johnathan chuckled,

"Relax, Nancy. I'm grabbing the boys, then we're heading out." He could tell she felt uneasy, and he didn't want to cause anymore discomfort. It was an awkward situation for him, too, but it was Nancy, and he could always talk to her a little easier than any other girl his age when he was younger. It hadn't changed much since then. He turned to leave, but she stopped him.

"Wait," she said quickly, swallowing her nerves and pride. "Its really good to see you, Johnathan. I mean it. Wanna grab coffee this weekend? Steve is going to see his parents, so I'll be stuck by myself all weekend, bored out of my skull if you say no."

"Sure," he nodded, smiling back at her. "Just call me when you want to go."

"Okay," she nodded. Nancy watched him leave, and she wondered if she had just made a mistake. She avoided him for a reason, and that reason was very detrimental to her decisions regarding Steve. He

made her question things, made her doubt the decisions she made already and planned to make in the future with her current fiancé. Inviting him out was probably a bad idea. But Nancy figured her resolve could handle it. Hopefully.

Will woke with a start, his chest heaving and his lungs aching. The space around his bed wasn't the same anymore. It was dark, damp, and covered in dirt and slime. He was there again, in the Upside Down. He'd woken up into it, and now he was trapped all over again.

"Hello?" He called out frantically. "Mom! Dustin! Johnathan! Anybody!" He screamed, though he didn't have a whole lot of energy in him to keep calling out. "Somebody help me!" He just hoped they could hear him, hoped they'd come get him again.

"Will?" A voice came through the darkness. He turned quickly, and he was more than surprised to see Eleven standing at the end of the bed, a single drop of blood falling from her nostril. "How?" He threw the blankets off of him, standing up and walking to her.

"Eleven? How did you find me?" He asked, his breath visible as he spoke, like smoke from a cigarette. Eleven stared blankly at him for a moment, then looked around. "El?"

"I heard you call," she said, bringing her attention back to him. "Are you... in the Upside Down?" She asked. Will cocked his head to the side.

"Aren't you?"

"No," she shook her head. For her, it was pitch black all around. She'd done this before, found people like this for Papa. This was how she opened the door so many years ago that the Demogorgon came through. She reached forwards and touched Will's hand, and he snapped back to his bed.

"Wait!" He shouted, jerking up in his bed again, this time, in the room he knew well, the was familiar and safe to him. The dirt and the slime was gone, replaced by the plastic and wood that everything was made out of. He threw the blankets off of him quickly and stood up,

looking around for Eleven. "Hello?" Nothing. She was gone.

Eleven jolted to life again, her whole body shaking violently. She hadn't been back to that darkness in some time, and she had almost forgotten how terrifying it was, never knowing what you were going to find when you got lost in it. Only, she wondered if it had been hearing Will calling out that led her to him, or if the monster was also lurking in that dark and she had only been lucky enough to be there in time to help Will.

Mike stirred beside her, feeling her shake violently. He sat up on his elbow, looking over at her. She kept her focus on the door, making sure that nothing was going to come through.

"El? You okay?" Mike asked sleepily, pushing himself upright until he was sitting directly beside her. "El, what happened?"

"Will," she said softly. Her head turned towards his, eyes wide and full of tears. "I heard him scream. Followed it... Into the Dark."

"The Dark?"

"Where Papa used to make me go. To find people," she explained the best she could. Mike seemed to understand somewhat, or he just didn't want to make her relive the experience by asking too many questions. "I found Will. I sent him back."

"He was in the Upside Down. You sent him home?" Mike asked, yawning despite the severity of the situation. She nodded. "I didn't know you could do that."

"I didn't either."

6. Chapter 6

Hey guys! Hope you enjoy this chapter :) its mostly Mike/Eleven sweetness, but next chapter will have more action and stuff! Leave a review if ya like it and let me know what you wanna see in the upcoming chapters :) sorry it took a couple of days, but enjoy!

Chapter 6:

Mike stood outside of Wills doorway, foot tapping against the wood flooring incessantly as he listened in to Mike and Eleven trading stories about the Dark and the Upside Down. He sucked in a deep breath, glancing at the clock on the wall to see how long he'd been there. Dustin came back from the kitchen, peeling the wrapper from a chocolate bar.

"Calm down, Mike. What's got you all worked up."

"Nothing." His eyes drifted into the room, where Will sat in front of Eleven on his bed, hands moving around as he explained everything he knew to her. Eleven leaned in close, listening intently, clearly interested by the connection they both share to the Upside Down. She could find him there, and he could see her. It was strange, for sure.

"You're not seriously jealous, are you?" Dustin raised an eyebrow. "Come on. Mike. Its Will. And Eleven. She doesn't give a damn about anyone but you, not really. Remember when we were kids and she threw Lucas off of you. She'd do anything for you."

"I'm not jealous." Mike glared up at Dustin, then leaned back against the wall. "Eleven doesn't understand things like that anyways. Feelings and what not."

"I think she understands more than you give her credit for. Eleven knows she has feelings for you, Mike." Dustin put a hand on his friends shoulder. "Relax. Okay? They're just talking. Will hasn't met anyone other than his mom and Hopper that he can really talk to about this stuff. You know how he's trapped by it. He thinks Eleven

can help him."

"Maybe she can, I don't know," Mike sighed, reaching up to pinch the bridge of his nose. "I don't know what's going on with me. Its like she's a weak spot, and she always has been. I want her to help Will. I just... Don't like the idea of him being close to her. Or anyone. Will's a handsome guy. Cathy even said so when we were hanging out."

"Cathy's a bitch," Dustin shrugged. "You actually had to worry about her running off to try and sleep with your best friend. Eleven ain't like that, Mike, and you know it. She's not like any other girl. And she's completely obsessed with you."

"I don't know about that."

"I do. She looks at you like you put the sun in the sky." Dustin chuckled when Mike blushed, and he walked into the room and flopped down in Will's desk chair. "So, what's the plan now, team? What exactly should we do about the Demogorgon?"

"Is there even anything we can do?" Will frowned. "We can't let Eleven take care of it, and its a lot stronger than us." He looked at the doorway, where Mike was leaning against the frame with his shoulders, arms crossed over his chest. "What do we do, Mike?"

"Nancy and Johnathan tried to kill it before. They hurt it. I bet if we do it a little smarter, a little better, between the lot of us, we can kill it," Mike shrugged his shoulders. "We should get Lucas here, and the four of us will set a trap. We know how to attract it."

"Four?" Dustin raised an eyebrow.

"Eleven can stay with Nancy or Joyce. She doesn't need to be there."

"Are you kidding me?" Dustin scoffed at Mike. "She's the most capable out of any of us." Eleven looked at Dustin, then at Mike. She frowned. "We can't do it without her, Mike. There's no way. That thing isn't human, and it's going to fight just as hard as we do."

"I'll come," Eleven said, looking into Mike's eyes intently. "I can help." Mike sighed, then turned away from the group, heading down towards the kitchen to get into the liquor that Joyce had in the

cabinets. She knew the boys were getting together at Wills, and she invited them to it, seeing as they were nearly old enough to buy alcohol anyways.

He pulled her whiskey, or Hoppers, really, from the cabinet and poured some into a small glass. He swirled it around mindlessly for a moment, then downed it quickly. Pushing the glass aside, Mike turned around and leaning back against the counter.

Eleven came into the kitchen, wearing a light blue sundress she picked out. It had a floral print on the skirt part, and had a ribbon that tied around her waist. She seemed to prefer dresses for some reason, but Mike wasn't complaining. She looked pretty in dresses.

"Mike," she said his name, and the words she wanted to say seemed to hide behind his name most of the time. He was getting better at listening to those hidden words when she spoke. He took a deep breath, then nodded,

"I know, El. I know we need your help, and I know you won't let us do it without you. I just..." He sighed heavily, dropping his gaze to his feet. "You don't understand how afraid I am of losing you again. I don't think I can handle it."

"I know." She walked closer to him. "Mike. I'm staying." She reached out reluctantly, resting her hand on his where it lay on the counter. "I won't leave. Never again. Promise."

"Okay," he smiled up at her half-heartedly. "Together, then."

"Together," she repeated.

Will had gone to bed early. He got to feeling worse as the night went on, so Mike got him his meds and sent him off to sleep. He'd asked for everyone to stay the night, so Dustin made a pile of blankets on the floor and crashed at the end of Will's bed.

Mike stayed out in the living room with Eleven, having turned the TV on for her. She liked to watch it, to absorb everything she saw like it would teach her everything she wanted to know.

Mike sat back on the sofa. He and Dustin had a few shots together. Will decided not to drink. And none of the boys thought it would be a great idea for Eleven to drink anything. She had never experienced alcohol before, and they figured it'd be best to keep her sober just in case.

Mike was buzzing a little, watching her with a smile as she stared into the TV like it had the answers to all of the world's great mysteries. Eleven could feel him looking at her, so she turned back to meet his gaze.

"Are you better now?" She asked him, and Mike shook his head a little. "Still feel weird?"

"It's not bad, El. I'm not in pain or sick or anything," he chuckled. "It's relaxing. People drink to calm their nerves sometimes. You don't have to look so worried." She stood and walked back to the couch, flopping down on it across from him.

"I want to. Next time," she said. "I want to learn. To try things."

"You have your whole life. No need to rush anything, El," he said, sinking farther back into the sofa. Eleven crawled over towards him on the couch, stopping when she was right at his side. Mike watched her carefully. "What're you doing?" He asked curiously.

"I like being close." She shifted so her back was against the couch, but she was angled towards Mike. He suddenly wanted to reach out, to grab her and bring her closer, to draw her in so he could feel what it was like to hold her the way he had wanted to ever since she came back to him. "Mike. Back then. You touched my lips with yours."

"A kiss," he nodded. "It's called a kiss, and yes, I remember."

"Did you kiss Cathy?" Eleven asked, staring down at her hands now as they fidgeted in her lap. Mike paused, not really wanting to tell her the truth. He sighed, then nodded hesitantly. Eleven took her bottom lip between her teeth. "Did you like it? More than..." She trailed off.

"No. El, listen. Forget Cathy. She was a distraction, at best. No one ever made me feel anything like you did. Like you do." He reached

over impulsively and put a hand on her cheek, leading her face up so he could look her in the eyes. "I don't care about anyone else, El. I don't like anyone else. Only you. You don't need to feel insecure."

"Okay," she said quietly, her cheeks flush, her face displaying the embarrassment and nervousness that her voice carried. "Mike, will you do it again?"

"Do what?"

"Kiss me." She shifted again so she was facing him completely now. Mike dropped his hand away, glancing over at the TV for a moment. "Mike?"

"I don't know if now is the best time," he told her honestly. "Being a little drunk makes it harder to control myself." He brought his attention back to her. "I don't want to push you too far too soon, El. There's still a lot for you to understand."

"Control? Control what?"

"Urges," he shrugged. "Everything I want that I can't do yet. Not now, but maybe in the future. Alcohol makes it harder to keep yourself from doing the things you want to, even if you know you shouldn't. So maybe it's best to wait." He brushed her wavy hair from her face. "I want to, El. I do."

"I want you to," she whined a little, and Mike couldn't help but think about how damn cute she was. It was starting to drive him crazy. Eleven wanted to be closer to him, to be everything that he wanted her to be. If it meant having to learn a whole lot about the way those things worked, she was okay with it.

"El," Mike breathed her name. She was inching closer, so close that she was practically in his lap now, which made the struggle only that much more difficult. "I don't want to push."

"Just a kiss?" She didn't understand. It was so quick and simple before, albeit thrilling. She didn't understand why he wouldn't do it again. Kissing was for people who really liked each other, as more than friends. She wanted to be more than his friend.

"Kissing leads to other things, El. Makes people want other things." He didn't want to explain it all to her right then, while he was buzzed and fighting back to parts of him that wanted her more than anything to be in his arms, or underneath him. Mike sucked in a breath as she moved further onto his lap. He grabbed her shoulders and pushed her back, pulling his legs out from under her. Eleven looked utterly defeated.

"Okay," she said solemnly, turning away from him. Mike brought her face back towards his, and he leaned down quickly to place a soft, gentle kiss on her forehead. Eleven smiled up at him when he leaned away. "But I thought..."

"I can kiss you anywhere," he told her, wrapping his arms around her to draw her closer, laying back on the sofa with her at his side. "For tonight, you're just going to have to settle for a kiss on your forehead. Another time, when I have more self control, I'll kiss you for real. Okay?"

Eleven nodded against his chest, sinking against his side and still grinning about the kiss on her head. Her cheeks were hot again, and she was content with that for now. Although she wanted it to be real, she just wanted that show of affection from him, and he'd given it to her another way. For the moment, she was happy with just that.

7. Chapter 7

Hey guys! So I love you! Your reviews are always so helpful and encouraging :) Makes me want to keep updating every day because I get so excited to see what you guys have to say! This chapter has got a lot of Mileven angst, so hope you enjoy! Let me know what you guys think, and thanks again, lovelies :)

Chapter 7:

Mike had called Nancy and asked her to take Eleven shopping for more intimate and personal clothing items. Eleven was at an age and a bust-size that required bras and things like that. Since Mike had no experience, and Eleven had never worn one before, he asked Nancy to take El shopping. Unfortunately for Eleven, that meant running into Cathy again, the mouthbreather that Mike had said he used as a distraction while she was gone.

Nancy walked into the store first, heading right for the section with women's undergarments since she'd been going to that same store pretty much her entire life. There wasn't a lot in Hawkins, and this place was the best place for young women and men to get decent clothing. While Nancy started looking through the racks of bras, Eleven hovered by the counter for a moment. Cathy wasn't there, so Eleven waited patiently.

After a few minutes, the girl came out from the back room, smacking on yet another piece of gum. Eleven stood up straight in front of the counter, a look of distaste on her face. She had question, lots of them, that Mike didn't really want to answer.

"Can I help you?" Cathy raised an eyebrow, staring back at Eleven fearlessly. She didn't know what she was, or what she could do. If Cathy knew, she probably would have been a lot more polite when talking to Eleven. Luckily for her, Eleven wasn't in the mood to cause pain. She just wanted answers.

"Mike," Eleven began, and Cathy snorted a little. "Did he look at you?"

"Excuse me?" Cathy scoffed.

"When you weren't dressed. Did he look?" Eleven asked her, more specifically this time. A sly, malicious grin spread on Cathy's face as she looked down at Eleven, who was blushing now, but also looked completely embarrassed. She nodded,

"Oh, yeah. A few times. Seemed to like what he saw back then." She leaned forwards on the counter, leaning on her elbows. "Honey, maybe he's just not interested in what you have to offer. You are a little small where I know Mike likes it big." Cathy wagged her finger in the direction of Eleven's chest, and the girl looked down. In comparison to Cathy's breasts, Eleven's were a good bit smaller. Insecurity took over, like an instinct she didn't know she had, and Eleven crossed her arms to cover her chest. "Don't worry, sweetie. Not everyone is well-endowed. Nancy certainly isn't." Cathy shot a glare towards Nancy, who was unaware of the whole conversation that was taking place at the counter.

"Why?" Eleven said, her face turning solemn. She hugged her torso tighter, then looked back up at Cathy, trying to understand what Mike wanted from Cathy. "Did he ever say no?" She asked now, her voice quieter. "When you tried to kiss him."

"Honey, Mike Wheeler never once said no to me until he came dragging you through my door," Cathy grimaced. "Thought you were his girlfriend, but now I'm not so sure. Me and him had some fun. He loved to kiss and roll around together. Hardly ever did anything together but that." Eleven felt a tear roll down her cheek, and she reached up immediately to wipe it away. Cathy giggled, "You tell our boy Mike that if he's not interested in you, then he just needs to come back to me."

"No. He likes me."

"Oh, sweetie. Mike likes any pretty little skirt that shows him attention. Boys like Mike, who grew up an outcast, they aren't too picky when they get older." Cathy blew a bubble with her gum. "Sorry, honey. Guess he's just not that into you."

Eleven turned away, unable to hear anymore. Everything she said

only confirmed her fears and fueled her insecurities. If Cathy was just a distraction, and he was still willing to kiss her and to look at her undressed, then he just must not see Eleven the same way. She waited too long, and his feelings must have faded. Mike only tried to make her feel better, that's all. He felt obligated, guilty.

Nancy came up to Eleven, handing her an armful of pretty, colorful, lacy bras to try on.

"It grosses me out that you may need pretty bras for my brother, but hell. Every girl wants to feel pretty." Eleven pushed them away, handing them quickly back to Nancy. She shook her head,

"No, I don't need them." She turned away from Nancy and started towards the door.

"Wait. El. Wait by the car, I have to pay for these!" She called to the girl, rushing over to the counter. She dropped the bras on it, and Cathy smirked down at her. Nancy frowned. "What? You got something to say?"

"Poor girl. Too stupid and naive to know when someone isn't interested."

"Cathy. I don't feel like you get an input. After all, all it takes for you to spread your legs for a guy is a few nice words," Nancy shot back in defense of Eleven. Cathy's face twisted in anger and embarrassment. "Trust me. When a guy tells you your easy or quick, it isn't a compliment." She snatched up the bag that Cathy stuffed the bras into and Nancy turned towards the door. "Always so nice to see you, Cathy. Good luck curing your next STD." She headed out of the door, and she froze in her steps when she noticed Eleven wasn't by the car. "Damn it."

Mike felt a fear churning in his stomach, making it hard for any words to get past his lips. He listened to Nancy talking about what happened, and somehow Mike just knew that Cathy must have said something to Eleven. She was a cruel person when she wanted to be, although Mike didn't find that out until after he ended their little fling. He thanked Nancy for the call, then hung up the phone.

He turned to grab his jacket and keys from the table by the door, but he instead had to dodge quickly to avoid being hit by it. Eleven came into the room, blood dripping down her nose, and the door slammed behind her. Her cheeks were streaked with tears, and her eyes were red and sad. Mike hated seeing her like that, and he knew then that he had been right about the whole Cathy thing.

"El? What's wrong?" Mike took a step forwards but stopped when Eleven grabbed the straps of her dress and peeled them from her shoulders. The top part of the dress fell down around her stomach, though the skirt stayed hung on her hips. Mike quickly turned away from her exposed chest, eyes focusing on the door.

"Mike. Look at me," Eleven practically begged. The desperation in her voice made his heart crack inside of him, and Mike hated Cathy for whatever she did to Eleven. "Mike!" Eleven shouted. "Please." He wanted to, but something in him kept his eyes locked on the door instead of Eleven. He wished he didn't feel so protective of her, even from himself. She was his innocent little glass angel that he was so afraid of breaking. "Mike, look," she pleaded again, and Mike felt his body jerked backwards, though she wasn't touching him. However, she didn't force his head to turn. It was like her telepathically tugging at him was just to get his attention.

"El, please don't make me do this," he said quietly in response. "I can't. Not yet."

"Why?" She demanded to know. "You looked at Cathy. She said so. You kissed her." Tears started to fall again, and her voice was being broken up by the sorrow in her tone. "Why not me?" She stepped closer to him, hands covering her chest now, hugging her body tightly. "Why can't you look at me?" Her body started to jerk with the sobs that she was trying so hard to hold back. Mike had only seen her cry a few times, and he kicked himself for being the reason this time. He snatched up his jacket, then turned, hands out to cover her, and put the jacket around her.

Eleven grabbed it, then hit the ground, landing on her knees, then falling back onto her bottom. She pulled her knees up to her chest, then buried her head in them, holding onto Mike's jacket and trying to stop the tears from falling. She must have looked so weak to him,

so pathetic. She felt that way, and it was a new feeling to her. It tore at her insides.

"Do you like her more?" Eleven sniffed, wiping her cheeks with the back of her hand. Mike stood there for a moment, just stunned and unsure of what to do or say. He'd never seen her break down like this. He took a deep breath, then knelt down in front of her. He rested his hands on her kneecaps, then pulled her knees away from her chest. Mike grabbed her hands, and he stood, pulling her up with him.

"I don't. Cathy was my first."

"First?"

"The first person I was ever... intimate with. The only one. Everyone has a first." He led her to the couch and sat her down. "Listen, El. When you get older, you start wanting to do things with the people you like. Or anyone, for some people. Like Cathy. You want to kiss them, and to touch them, and to look at them when they aren't dressed. I wasn't careful with my first. I should've saved it for someone I like a lot more than Cathy. You... can't ever change it, or take it back. That's why... I don't want to push things too far. I don't want you to regret it if I'm your first like I regret letting Cathy be mine."

"I don't understand, Mike. You kissed me first."

"Not kissing, El. More than that. Much more." He ran his hands down his face. "I guess now is as good a time as any to explain this stuff to you." He shifted so he could look directly at her, though his cheeks were already flush with nerves and shame at having to teach the birds and the bees to Eleven. Maybe he should have asked Nancy to do that as well. "When people get older, and they like each other. They... get undressed together. They touch each other, and they.. uh... embrace each other." Finding the right words while being delicate was more difficult than he thought it would be. "They have sex."

"What?"

"Sex. It's um..." He groaned in frustration and ran his hand through his shaggy black hair. "It's when... a man uses his intimate parts to please a woman's... intimate parts." Way to go, Mike. Great description. He wanted to crawl into a hole and hide there forever. "Some people don't treat it like a big deal, but it is. Okay? Your first is a big deal, and you should hold out for the person you really want to give it to."

"I want to give it to you."

"El," he sighed, "I want to. You don't know how much I do, but... you're just learning about this stuff. If you really mean it, then we should still wait awhile. There's... other things going on, and it's better to take it slow."

"You didn't with Cathy."

"El, forget Cathy!" He said a little louder than he wanted to. Eleven flinched back a little, hugging the jacket around her even tighter. She blinked at him, then stood. Eleven shook her head at him,

"Why? You can't. She was your first. And only." She turned and headed into the kitchen. Eleven searched through the cabinets, then she found a few bottles of alcohol that looked similar to what they drank at Will's. She grabbed a bottle, and the top twisted off for her. Mike jumped up from the couch. After she already gulped down a bit of it, Mike hurried over and took the bottle away from her.

"El, stop it," he frowned, setting the bottle on the counter behind her. "What're you doing?"

"People drink to relax. To calm down." She reached for the bottle again, but Mike grabbed her hand. All of this was clearly overwhelming to her, and for some reason, she couldn't get over the whole Cathy thing. Maybe Mike didn't understand because Eleven didn't have anyone else besides Mike, and she never had. He had nothing to worry about comparing himself to, while the same couldn't be said for Eleven. He wanted to understand, to make it better, but giving her the talk didn't do it. He wasn't sure what else he could try.

"Eleven, no."

"I'm not a child anymore," he said softly, turning her head downwards. For the first time, Mike let himself look at her. The jacket was slightly parted in the middle of her torso, where her chest was still bare underneath. He could see the space between her breasts, as well as her flat stomach underneath them. He gulped a little, then his cheeks quickly got hot in response.

"I know you're not a child." He pried his eyes away to lift them to hers. "El, how can I help? What do you want me to do?" She stared at him for a moment, then let his large jacket slide with ease off of her arms. "El..." This time, he didn't look away. It would only hurt her feeling more, making her insecure again. The bruises and cuts were healing, though still visible, but they hardly took away from the image of Eleven's bare torso. She had grown up. She was a woman, and she had the body of a beautiful woman now. Mike admired it for a moment, then reached out to run his fingertips down her arm gently.

"I just want you to see me. Not the girl you knew before. But the grown up I am." She shivered slightly at the light touch of his fingertips. He stepped forwards, and one hand slid around her bare back, feeling the skin over her spine for a moment. His fingertips gently brushed over the dip in her back, over the slight bumps of her spine, then he pulled her closer to him. Eleven let out a sharp breath, but she didn't protest. There was something in his eyes she hadn't seen before, a certain longing, a desire. It made her feel relieved that she was able to make him feel those things. Maybe he was interested in her after all.

"I see you," he told her, his other hand coming up to cup her cheek. He tilted her face upwards, thumb brushing the tear streaks away. "I'm looking." He bent over and lightly pressed his lips to hers. He left them there for a few moments, several beats of his heart, relishing in the softness of her lips. Eleven's hands grabbed onto the front of his shirt, and she held on tightly until he leaned away from her. He stayed close, resting his forehead on hers as he hooked the straps of her dress with his fingers and pulled them up back into place. "Let go of this whole mess with Cathy. She is nothing compared to you, El. I promise. You're... so perfect." He took a deep breath and stepped

away from El, grabbing her hand as he did. "Let's go get those clothes from Nancy. She was worried."

"I'm sorry..."

"Don't be. I just hope you understand now. That I don't like anyone but you, El."

She smiled, "I understand."

8. Chapter 8

Chapter 8:

Will gasped as he sat up from his bed, terrified and saddened by his surroundings. He was there again, for the second night that week. The Upside Down was making it impossible to sleep, and it liked to lace those icy fingers around him as often as it physically could.

He climbed out of the bed slowly, standing up now to look around. It was freezing, just as it had always been, and the grossly familiar slime clung to the walls and the wooden surfaces around him. He panted hard, chest heaving as he looked around. He hated this place, hated the feeling it gave him, and hated how his breath swirled around in front of him when he spoke.

"Eleven?" He called out, unsure of what else to do. If she heard him before, maybe she'd hear him again. Will hated that he needed a hero, but he didn't want to spend another moment in the Upside Down. If the monster came, he'd be defenseless and forced to run. Will couldn't get lost again.

"Eleven! Please, help me!" He cried out desperately, hugging his body as the shivering began. Will slowly sat back down on the edge of the bed that was now shrouded in darkness like everything else. "El! Can you hear me?!"

"Quiet," a soft voice came, and Will turned towards the door. Eleven was there, eyes darting around nervously. "Don't scream." She walked into the room, wearing nothing but a large tee shirt that looked like one of Mike's. Will stood and hurried to her, pulling her into a hug of pure relief. Almost as soon as he pulled her to his chest, Will woke in his bed.

He sat up, lifting his hands up as a weird sort of tingling settled over his palms where he had grabbed onto her arms. It was a relief to know she could hear him, even in the Upside Down Eleven could find him and for some reason, touching her brought him back to where he really belonged.

Eleven woke, too, never being too fond of lingering in that dark place. It was scary for her, and she only went when she felt like she had no choice. Her shoulders were buzzing with little pinprick like sensations, something she only felt once before when she touched that thing, the monster, and she brought it into her world.

She wondered if she was doing something wrong or dangerous. When she sat up, Mike stirred beside her. His eyes fluttered open, and he sat up on his elbow to look at her.

"El, you okay?" He asked her, blinking through the sleep still settled in his eyes. She nodded, but her attention stayed focused on her lap. "What happened?" Mike asked, pushing himself upright so he was sitting next to her.

"Will," she said, and that was all the explanation Mike needed. He put an arm around her shoulders, dragging her against his side. Eleven laid her head on his shoulder, but she still felt something in her gut that she didnt like. Maybe it was guilt or concern. It was hard to distinguish the two at the moment. No one had ever held her like that before except Mike.

"Is he okay?" Mike asked, hand moving up and down her arm to comfort her. Eleven's eyes never lifted from her lap, but she nodded again in response.

"Im sorry, El. Im sorry you had to go back there." He wasn't sure what was upsetting her so badly this time, but all he could do is try to comfort her as best as he could. He laid back and Eleven followed him, resting her head on his chest. The steady rhythm of his heartbeat steadied her nerves for the moment.

"Mike. Do you only hug people you like?"

"Uh, no, not always. You hug family and friends sometimes." He looked down at her. "Why?" Eleven was a little relieved. Will was in fact her friend after all, so it wasn't as big of a deal as she was making it. She shrugged her shoulders, and Mike let it go, chalking it up to Eleven still wondering if she was the only person in Mike's life.

Eleven had almost forgotten about Troy and what happened to her. Other things that she deemed important occupied her mind, mainly Mike. She was finally reaching a point where she could cast aside those nagging insecurities that Cathy created in her.

Mike had left her alone, heading over to Wills for just a moment to check in on him. Eleven stayed at the house willingly, still a little unnerved by the closeness of Will a couple nights before. She wondered through the apartment, picking at the lids of boxes curiously bit daring to move or touch any of the objects inside. Until she found the old walkie talkie that is. She lifted it gently, turning it over in her hand as she stared down at it, all those old memories resurfacing again.

She was so focused on the gadget in her hands that she barely noticed the door creak open. Her head jerked up, expecting to see Mike, but instead three men stormed into the apartment, guns raised. Troy was among them, standing back at the flanks of the leading man.

"Come with us Eleven," the lead man said calmly. Eleven stood slowly, hands grabbing at the ends of Mike's shirt to tug it down over her exposed legs. "Your father would like to see you."

"Papa?" She questioned, eyes widening. "I thought... he's alive?"

"And looking for you. After gaining some new information," the man started, glancing back at Troy, who had undoubtedly given them the information they needed. She knew instantly because of the malicious grin cutting through his twisted expression. Blood dripped from her nostril as she focused on the guns. Troy's flew from his hand first, his grip dramatically weaker than the other two men's.

The man flanking to the left of the front one pulled a small silver thing from his pocket. It was cylindrical in shape, and has a gap between the metals all around the middle of it. Eleven had never really seen anything like it, and she hardly expected it to do anything. But she was wrong.

There was a click, then the metal cylinder let out a loud, piercing tone that reverberated through her skull, tearing through her ear drums to get there. The older men couldn't hear it, but Troy could.

However, he had the advantage of ear plugs, Eleven noticed. How forward thinking of him.

Eleven hit the ground, hands flying up desperately to cover her ears and dull the piercing sound coming from the little metal cylinder. She screamed in agony, blood spewing from her nose now as she tried her hardest, despite the noise, to focus on the metal thing and break it somehow. It was so hard for her to think, to do anything.

Troy ran over to her, dropping down to pin her to the ground, facing up towards him. He sat on her hips, grabbing her wrists and prying them from her ears to hold them to the ground. Eleven could taste the warm metallic sensation of blood in her mouth. In defiance, she spit as much of it as she could up at Troy, and little splatters of blood decorated his face.

In response, Troy struck her. Eleven cried out again, unable to bear that sound any longer. Then, the lights started flickering. Troy lifted his head to look around, and the men stepped back towards the door.

"We need to go," the leader said. "Now."

"Stay here, kid, and keep her contained. We'll be back." The men shuffled nervously from the door. Troy watched on in confusion. Eleven scrambled and rolled onto her stomach, trying to claw her way out from underneath him.

"Oh no you don't," he snatched her arms up and pushed them behind her back. Eleven knew what was coming, and they had left Troy behind to serve as bait.

"You have to go. Run," she cried out. Troy snorted at her, and he sat up to flip her over onto her back. Eleven stared up at him fearfully. "You'll die."

"As long as that thing's running, you can't do anything. They said so. They bailed me out only if I helped bring you back. And that's exactly what I'm going to do." He moved off of her to stand, but Eleven used it as an opportunity to pry herself away from him. When she jerked downwards, he stumbled, and his grip on her arms loosened just enough for her to run.

"Please, leave!" The flickering lights grew more frantic, more frequent. Eleven knew the monster wouldn't attack her, not directly. But it smelled her blood, and it knew someone else was there. Troy ran after her, tackling her from behind. He reached around to grab her by her throat with one hand, his other arm snaking around her waist to hold her still.

"You're coming with me. Or I'm going to make you wish you did." He squeezed on her throat, and it was just enough of an adrenaline boost, a pulse of anger, for Eleven to find the strength and focus to knock the metal cylinder from the table. It clattered to the floor, and the room fell silent. She gasped in relief, gaining control again and throwing him off of her.

Troy hit the wall, then sank to the ground in defeat. He reached out to her, trying to snatch her ankle, but Eleven focused and shattered the bones in his hand. Then, she started to get dizzy, her mind still spinning and her ears still aching from the assault of the screeching tone. Eleven stumbled back, and Troy, through the water pooling in his eyes, just up to drag her down to the ground with him.

He cradled his injured hand, teeth grinding, tears falling down his cheeks as he bit back the cries of pain that wanted to escape his lips. Troy managed to climb back on top of her, reaching down to close his other hand around her throat. This time, he squeezed as hard as he could.

"You little bitch. Fuck taking you alive. I'm going to end you now." Spots clouded her vision, and she strained to scream, to call for Mike, to do anything. A familiar growl came from behind them, and Troy's hand was suddenly snatched away.

Across the room there was a black ooze covered spot on the wall, and the monster had come. It crawled to them silently as Troy was choking Eleven, and it grabbed hold of his ankle. It started dragging him back towards the goop on the wall, and Troy started screaming. Eleven stared in horror as it pulled him up to the wall, and Troy began to slide in feet first.

"Help me! Please!" He cried, reaching out for Eleven. But she didn't move. She didn't budge in the slightest. She just stared at him, blood

smear over her cheek from her nostril. Her hand came up to lightly touch the tender area where his fingers had been. Troy understood. That gesture was meant to seal his fate, but it didn't stop him from screaming. He wailed and begged for mercy until the last inch of him disappeared into the wall.

Mike returned an hour later. He walked through the door and dropped his keys on the table, shedding his beige jacket and tossing it onto the back of the couch. He looked around. The TV was on, but Eleven wasn't in her usual spot on the couch watching it.

"El?" He called out, heading for the bedroom. As he stepped into the room, he heard the shower running in the bathroom. He knocked on the door. "El, you in there?" He asked. "You okay?" There was no answer, but he could faintly hear crying.

Mike pushed through the door, despite his hesitations about seeing her naked before. Eleven was sitting at the bottom of the shower, knees pulled up to her chest and face buried in them. The water was only running over her legs, while her hair seemed to be dry.

"El?" He knelt down by the edge of the tub, laying a hand on her bare knee gently. She didn't move, but he could see her body trembling with silent sobs. Mike reached over and turned off the water, snatching a towel from the rack and throwing it over her. "Come on," he urged, trying to pull her up by her shoulders. Eleven reluctantly stood, though she wobbled a bit. She kept her face low, mostly covered by her hair. Mike pulled the towel around her, then walked her into the bedroom.

He stepped away from her for a moment, pulling a tee shirt from his drawer. He pushed the towel off of her, keeping his eyes focused on her arms as best as he could. He lifted them slowly, carefully, and he slid the shirt over her head and arms, tugging it down to cover her body. That's when he noticed the red marks on her wrists.

"What happened to you, El?" He asked softly, taking her hand in his and brushing his thumb gently over the red mark. She kept her face hidden. "Hey." Mike dropped her hands to cup her face, lifting it up even though she resisted. His heart sank when he saw the dried blood

under her nose and across her cheek. Her eyes seemed hollow and cold, void of life for the moment. She was in shock. Mike eased her down onto the bed.

He tilted her head to the side gently, and he saw dark, purple bruises forming around her throat. His eyes immediately watered, the tear drops clinging to his eyelashes, which held them back. Mike pulled her to him, holding her carefully, one hand pressed into her back and the other buried in her hair, bringing her head to his chest.

"Its okay, El. I'm here. Its all going to be okay." He rubbed her back, trying to think, trying to understand what may have happened. Eleven finally moved, lifting her head away from him. She kept her gaze focused on the ground, but she finally spoke.

"Papa... sent men for me." She swallowed hard. "Troy came. They... used a thing. It made me... I couldn't..." she trailed off, not able to find the right words at the moment. "He attacked me. The... monster came. The men ran. Troy stayed. He was their bait." She spoke slowly and in broken, brief sentences, unable to muster up much more. "He tried to kill me. I let... I let he monster take him."

"Oh, El," Mike shook his head, guilt overcoming him. "I should have never left you alone. I should have been here. I'm so sorry, El." He reached out to her, but Eleven shied away. She was mad at him, and she didnt blame him, but her whole body roared with the events of the day, sore and throbbing in her muscles and throat. It hurt to speak.

"Shower." She stood, wobbled, then made her way back to the bathroom. She turned on the shower, the hot water steaming it up immediately. Without taking the shirt off, Eleven sat at the bottom of the shower again. Mike stood and walked to her, closing the bathroom door behind him. He pulled off his shirt, then climbed into the tub behind her.

It took a moment to find space behind and around Eleven, but once he got situated, Mike reached around to pull her back against him. Eleven relaxed against his chest, letting the warm water drench her from her chest down. Mike turned her head slightly, craning his own neck a little so he could wash the blood away from her face. Once he

was done, he circled his arms around her shoulders, and he just held her, not saying anything, not moving.

Eleven sank into him, feeling safe finally, and warm. Her hand clung to his arms desperately, never wanting to be separated from him again. She was strong willed, and she would recover. But they found a way to keep her from using her powers, and that terrified her. If they came again, she wouldn't be able to protect herself. It was odd. The monster, her enemy and great fear, had saved her life. She still felt that guilt for letting Troy be taken. That was a fate worst than death. And she willingly doomed him to it.

The memory of his hand on her, grabbing her, holding her down, choking her. She shook with the horror of it, which made Mike tighten his own grip on her. He kissed the top of her head, and it seemed to settle her for the moment.

"He did this to you. Troy."

"Yes. He held me down."

"Choked you?"

A sob halted her speech for a moment, but Eleven held it back successfully. Mike's voice was burning with fury, with hatred, and with guilt. He was talking through his teeth, and Eleven wanted no part of anymore violence.

"Yes." She swallowed again, the pain of it causing her to whimper a little. Mike bent over to kiss her shoulder, then kiss the side of her neck tenderly. She winced a little, but that was a welcome pain. Mike could kiss her wherever he pleased. It would never be unwelcome.

"No one will ever lay their hands on you again. I swear it." The blind determination and confidence made Eleven's heart flutter. She knew he was defenseless to guns and other weapons of the sort, but the certainty in his voice convinced her, even for a moment, that it was true. That Mike would somehow overcome all odds and keep her out of harm's reach. Even though Papa was alive again.

"Okay," she spoke, and she let her head fall back against his chest

again. Mike cradled her under the heat of the shower, and he didn't say anything, didn't ask anymore questions. It pained her to speak, so he was content with holding her in silence. He didn't budge until the trembling stopped and the water got cold. Then he helped her from the tub and into the bed, letting her curl up at his side and drift off.

Well Troy is gone :) but Papa is back. Hope you guys enjoyed the chapter! i know its long and pretty dramatic, but people are finding out that Eleven is back, and thus the danger is beginning! Poor girl cant catch a break! Pretty please leave some of your amazing reviews to let me know what you think and what you want to happen. I was thinking about having Mike and Eleven explore some mild intimacy ;) what do you think? Thanks again, and I'll update soon! Maybe tonight if I get feedback before sleep XD

9. Chapter 9

Since you guys have been just... showering me with reviews, and I'm on a writer's high XD so excited that you guys like the story, I feel as though its only fair I keep my promise and update again tonight. You all are incredible, and your reviews mean the world to me :) and since everyone agreed, WARNING: Mild sexual content ahead. Enjoy, my lovelies! For this chapter is all Mileven fluff. a thank you for your awesomeness :)

Chapter 9:

Mike didn't even want to pretend that he knew what Eleven was going through. The most painful thing he'd ever experienced was losing Eleven, but he was never injured, never attacked, and never as scared as he imagined Eleven was when those men and Troy broke into their home.

The day after, Mike woke to find Eleven standing in front of the bathroom mirror. She was staring at herself, an expression of distaste on her face. He sat up and stretched his bare arms over his head. A glance at the clock surprised him. It was three in the morning, and she didn't look like she had slept a wink that night. He wondered how long she'd been in there, staring at herself in the mirror with that painfully sad face.

"El," he said her name with a short yawn. She looked over at him for a moment, then blushed. "El, what're you doing?" Eleven dropped her gaze to the floor in embarrassment, so Mike threw the blankets off of his legs and walked sleepily to her. "What are you looking at?"

"The marks," she explained. When she looked up at him, he understood what she meant. the bruises on her throat darkened in the shape of fingerprints, and a small purple bruise had also grown on her cheek, under her left eye. "I don't like them. It's..." A reminder. She didnt know how to explain it, but that's what they were. They reminded her of what happened, and what she did.

"They'll heal, El," he told her, running his hand up and down her arm. Eleven shook her head. "No?"

"I don't like them," she repeated in a whine this time. She frowned at her reflection. "Not pretty."

"You're wrong," he argued, using his hand to pull her face away from her reflection, so he could look into her eyes. "You're still very pretty. You won't ever be not pretty, El." Her cheeks flushed, but he could still tell she wasn't entirely convinced. Mike had to prove it to her.

"But--" He cut her off by quickly leaning down to kiss her. He didn't just hold his lips there in a still serenity, no, not this time. He moved them over hers, exploring her mouth with his. Eleven stood still, dumbfounded for a moment, but she eventually sank into it, completely at Mike's mercy.

She believed him. The heat and the passion behind that kiss was enough to convince her that he meant what he said, that he truly and honestly believed in his words. Eleven's heart thumped violently against her chest, making it hard for her to breathe anymore through her nose. His mouth owned hers, no breath could escape for those long moments when he captured her lips.

"El," he breathed her name when he pulled back. "Don't hold her mouth closed so tightly." She looked at him in confusion. "Just trust me," he smiled, and she did. Her jaw loosened, and he quickly pushed them apart with another kiss, catching Eleven off guard as she felt his tongue on hers. It was an odd sensation at first, warm, wet, and hot all at once. But Eleven accepted it. Mike knew what to do. She didn't. She was learning it all as it happened.

She was panting heavily by the time Mike removed his mouth from hers, and she could still taste him on her lips. Eleven longer for more, to feel that sensation, to make Mike feel as good as she did when he held her close.

Seven years was a long time to yearn for someone, to wonder often what it would have been like if she had never vanished with the monster. Mike would sometimes think about a moment like this, wondering what she would look like as a young woman, an adult instead of a child. He was more than taken by what he saw when she first returned. Eleven was beautiful to him, a stunning yet strong woman that Mike knew he'd never let go of.

Now, as he looked down at her longing eyes, her red lips that were still glossy from their kiss, he knew he wanted to show Eleven just what he'd been desperate for ever since she returned. He grabbed her, his arms flexing as he hoisted her up from her legs, wrapping them around his waist. Before, he'd been too small, too weak to carry her. Now, Mike was grown, and he was taller, more lean than before.

He carried her into the bedroom, and he set her down on the bed. She stared at him in wide eyed wonder as he crawled over her, forcing her back into the mattress.

"What do I do?" She asked him. Mike raised an eyebrow at first, but he quickly realized what she was asking.

"Nothing, El. You don't have to do anything." He brushed her chestnut waves from her face, then leaned down to kiss her again. This time, Eleven opened her jaws all her own, inviting him in to deepen the kiss. Mike took the opportunity, tasting her lips and tongue with his, savoring it. She really was perfection, so unique and irresistible.

Mike moved his kisses to her cheek, then let his lips ghost over the skin, leaving a trail of goosebumps from her jaw to her collarbone, where he let his lips fall. He gently nipped at the skin, drawing a gasp from Eleven. She didn't expect biting to be a part of this, but she couldn't deny that it thrilled her a little.

Mike slid his mouth up to her neck, lingering there with a plentiful amount of kisses. He stroked the soft skin lightly with his tongue, and Eleven whimpered, her hands flying up to grab onto his tense biceps.

"Mike," she breathed heavily, an anxiousness rising in her. It hit suddenly and hard enough to make her squirm. Mike felt her so he leaned back, worried that he had pushed her too far. She whined again. "No," she frowned, wrapping her arms around his neck and pulling him back down to her. "Stay."

"I'm not going anywhere," he grinned. He grabbed the hem of her sleep shirt, or his shirt really. She preferred his, and he had plenty to share. His eyes met hers. "Is it okay? For me to take it off?"

"Is that... what you want?" She asked him, briefly remembering how hesitant he was to ever look at her when she was undressed before. He was waiting, holding out, she supposed, trying to time it right for her. Now was good. Eleven needed him more than ever, needed his reassurance.

"Very much," he told her, and she nodded her approval, nervous all of a sudden. She never had a problem with it before, but the hunger in his eyes made it different somehow. She started to shake slightly as he began tugging the fabric over her head, discarding it to the floor and leaving her in nothing but the underwear Nancy had bought for her.

They were black with a lace trim, standing out strongly against her pale skin. Mike admired her body for a moment, his eyes trailing over her bare breasts, down her flat stomach, and to those delicious hips that were just begging to be grabbed.

Mike sat back, taking her thin upper arms in his hands and pulling her back with him, so they were both sitting upright. He slid an arm around her waist and pulled her to him, and the sudden heat of his bare chest on hers made Eleven shudder with something that longed to feel more of his heated skin.

He kissed her again, intoxicated by the flavor of her flush lips. He couldn't get enough of it, and he never wanted to stop feeling them against his own. But he couldn't just kiss her forever.

"Maybe we should stop here," he let out a sigh, resting his forehead against hers. "This is all... new to you."

"Not yet," she shook her head. "I'm fine." Her hand reached up to tangle in his hair, to feel the softness against her palm once again. Her hands had gotten so rough from being in the Upside Down. The gentle softness of his hair was a welcome sensation against them.

Mike didn't know how much he could take without going over the edge and breaking through all the boundaries he put up for himself, to protect Eleven from what he wanted to do. He'd never experienced intimacy like this before.

Cathy was already experienced, and she didn't take her time with sex. It was immediate gratification for her, and it didn't feel good for Mike, not the first time or any after. He never really enjoyed it. His first time was wasted on her, and this, with Eleven, is what he always imagined it could have been. Sweet, sensual, driving him mad with how warm and fragile she felt under his touch.

Mike laid her on her back again, and his hand slid up her side, over her stomach, finding its way gradually to one of her breasts. Eleven inhaled sharply when he grabbed it, though it didn't hurt, and he was still being oh so gentle. His thumb flicked over the center, the most sensitive part, and she let out another whimper. Her eyes closed, and she took her lip between her teeth to try and stop the sounds she wanted to make.

"Mike," she panted after a moment, shaking as his hand travelled around her body some more. It slid down her stomach, jumping over to her outer thigh from there, his fingers slipping under the lace of the underwear at her hip.

"Yes?" He asked. Mike was taking it agonizingly slow, holding back that primal part of him that wanted to ravage her, to hear her scream for him, to know what it felt like to be inside of her.

"Something... I feel..." She squirmed under his hand, her bare legs coming together and squirming with her torso. Mike smiled down at her, knowing good and well exactly what she was feeling. Lust, desire, yearning. She wanted to be touched even more, to be explored all over, but she didn't realize it. How could she understand that feeling? It was new to her.

"Down here?" He asked her, fingertips lightly tracing down her stomach, stopping at the hem of her underwear. Eleven whined.

"Make it stop."

"Stop?" He raised an eyebrow, pulling his hand away. Suddenly, his hand was jerked forwards, back to where he had it before. A small drop of blood started to form just under her nose, and Mike quickly used the blanket to wipe it away. "No powers, El. Just enjoy it. Teasing is half the fun."

"Teasing?" She whimpered. "I don't like it. Mike, I want..." She didn't know what she wanted. It was new, and she didn't understand a single bit of it. She wanted his hand to continue, to stop the burning want in her gut.

"I know," he whispered softly, picking at the hem of her underwear. He slid his hand underneath, moving down to that oh so sensitive place that he knew no one had been before.

"Mike," she cried out, something like a moan escaping her lips. Her hands flew up to her mouth to cover it, eyes wide with shock, confusion, and embarrassment. Mike used his free hand to encourage her hands away from her mouth.

"It's okay. It's normal. If it feels good, you can make sounds." He kept his eyes on hers, holding her gaze as his fingers explored the untouched parts of Eleven, the warm, wet place that she unknowingly wanted Mike to touch. She continued to squirm, body shaking slightly, hands gripping his arms desperately. He moved his fingers in a steady rhythm, not too fast, not too slow.

Mike had never deflowered anyone, and he was being particularly gentle just in case it was different. He didn't push his fingers into her, he kept them on the outside, on the spot that he knew had all the nerve endings. Better for her to learn slow, he figured. Even though it tortured him, he wouldn't go too far that night. He'd decided to try one thing at a time, teach her gradually.

"Wait. Wait," she cried out, her legs starting to tremble violently around his hand. Her grip on his arms tightened, and her eyes widened again in a sudden state of fear and confusion. Mike didn't stop. He knew what it was, and that was lesson one for Eleven. The ultimate goal for Mike.

Her back arched, and she gasped in a breath, letting out a louder, longer moan than before, her legs snapping shut. Her hands frantically pushed him away from that spot, that heated center between her legs. He removed his hand, but he stayed close to her, laying at her side with his other hand on her cheek as she convulsed a few times and relaxed against the mattress again. Her breaths were ragged, her eyes still wide, still unsure of what happened.

"What happened to me?" She asked, panting hard as her body continued to shake for a moment, jerking occasionally. Mike chuckled, then laid beside her, draping his arm over her stomach and using the other to support his head so he could look down at her.

"It's a good thing. It's what all of the touching and the intimacy is supposed to lead to. An orgasm."

"I like it," she smiled up at him, still breathless from the whole experience. She was learning little by little, stepping into the role of woman instead of lost child. Mike was leading the way, helping her learn and adjust and teaching her what it meant to be with someone in every way. "What about you?"

"Hm?"

"Shouldn't you... do that too?" Her cheeks flushed again, a dull pink that showed even under the bruise on her cheek. Mike shook his head, then kissed her again.

"Next time. Lets move slow."

"But..."

"Relax, El. I loved it. Every intense second of it. I'm not unsatisfied. I promise."

"It was good," she beamed up at him. "You're... good at it." He laughed at that, rolling his eyes at her innocence and how damn cute she was.

"Thanks, El. Now, come on. Lets get some sleep, hm?" He suggested, and Eleven rolled onto her side so she was facing him. Her hands grabbed onto his, and she curled into him. Mike let an arm fall over her, like it was supposed to shield her from everything that would mean her harm. "Goodnight, El."

She smiled. The contentment on her face was undeniable.

"Goodnight, Mike."

10. Chapter 10

Sorry it took a little longer to update this time! I've been sick for like a week now and I've developed this awful cough and the occasional fever DX but heres the new chapter!! :) Thanks again for all the amazing reviews. They literally make my day ten times better. You guys are what motivate me to update so often! Enjoy and let me know what you think, lovelies :)

Chapter 10:

Mike walked sleepily from his bedroom, the sun beaming annoyingly through the blinds that were opened for some reason. He raised a hand to shield his eyes, but all of that annoyance disappeared when he saw Eleven, standing by the stove.

She was muttering to herself in a panic, waving her hand over the pot. Eleven reached for the pot, then winced away when the metal along the side burned her fingers. Mike hurried over, turning off the gas on the stove top, then grabbing the pot by the plastic handles and moving it into the sink.

At the bottom of the pot, Mike discovered, was three whole eggs, not cracked nor covered with water. The eggs were placed in the pot alone, and the shells had started to darken and burn, and they smelled awful. Eleven stood back, her hands clasped together over his chest, tears welling in her eyes.

"Mike. I'm sorry, Mike. I wanted to make eggs." In truth, she'd never tried to cook before. Years ago, when she first escaped, she watched as the diner owner make food for her. Eleven observed and knew that normal families ate eggs in the morning. She just wasn't sure how, but she didn't think it would be that hard.

"El," Mike chuckled, unable to stop himself from laughing at the whole situation. He ran cold water into the pot and left it to sit, turning around to look at her. She seemed to relax a little when he started laughing, a genuinely amused laugh. "Why did you want to make eggs?" He asked her, leaning back against the counter.

"For you," she told him, her arms falling to her sides. Her cheeks flushed with embarrassment, and she looked terribly disappointed or ashamed of herself. Mike walked to her, taking her hands in his,

"You don't have to do that," he told her. "Next time, I'll show you how to cook eggs, okay?" He reached up to run a hand through her hair, ruffling it a bit.

"Okay," she nodded, a small smile blooming where her look of disappointment had been. Mike yawned, then walked into the living room, flopping down on the couch and flicking on the TV. Eleven didn't follow like Mike expected her to. He glanced back over the back of the couch, and she was standing there, staring at the wall across the room from her.

"El, you okay?" He asked, standing up again. Her gaze stayed focused on the wall, and she didn't respond. "El?" Mike walked over to her slowly, not wanting to startle her. She lifted her hand and pointed where her eyes were fixated.

"There. The monster came from there," she told him, the image of Troy being pulled into the Upside Down fresh in her mind. Eleven swallowed hard. "It took Troy. I just... watched." Mike looked up at the wall, then put a hand on her shoulder, turning her away from it.

"Eleven, it's not your fault," he told her, taking her by the shoulders so he could look directly into her eyes, to show her the sincerity. Eleven couldn't believe him though, not when he begged for her help, help that she could have given him. But at the time, all she could think about was how he held her down, how he hit her, how he choked her to the edge of consciousness. Her fury took over.

"Do you think..." she trailed off, shaking her head. "What if he's okay? Stuck there... Because of me..." So long ago Mike and Eleven had a conversation like this. She blamed herself for opening the gate to the monster that allowed it to travel to their world. Now, she was experiencing a similar guilt over Troy's death. Every time it was quiet, the memory came back to torture her all over again, sinking like an anchor in her chest.

"El..."

"I can look," she said suddenly, a determination coming over her. "Just to see." Mike's eyebrows furrowed,

"No. El, I don't want you to go into the dark place for an asshole like Troy. He doesn't deserve your help. He tried to kill you, El." Mike wasn't about to risk El for Troy. There wasn't anything in the world Mike would have risked El for, and even if there was, Troy would be on the very bottom of the list. He did nothing but torment Mike and his friends when they were kids. Worst of all, he attacked Eleven, and for that, Mike was okay with letting him suffer.

"If he's okay... shouldn't I help?" She asked, glancing over at the wall. "That place... it's bad, Mike. So bad." Her gaze fell to her feet. "Please, Mike."

"El, no. You don't owe him anything."

"Mike," her eyes snapped up to his, that determination only strengthening. "I won't be a monster." That was exactly how she felt, ever since she watched Troy being dragged to his death. But there was a chance Troy was alive, since Will and Eleven both managed to allude the monster for some time. She only survived because Hopper frequently left food in the woods. Troy wouldn't even know how to find his way back alone.

Eleven started towards the bedroom, and Mike followed.

"El, don't do this, please. You hate doing this, and you know it. You can't really help him this way anyways, even if he was alive, which I highly doubt." He stopped as she lowered herself onto the mattress. "El, you can't save him even if you find him alive."

"I want to know." She settled in, pulling the blanket up over her and rolling onto her side to get comfortable. The room was dead silent, other than Mike's breathing, which was made a little louder by his intense disapproval. She needed to sleep, and it wouldn't take her long to get there. It was how she reached Will at night. If she looked for Troy, she could at least know if he was dead or alive.

Mike sat on the edge of the bed after a couple of minutes of watching her. After a half hour had passed, her breathing slowed, and her body

became completely relaxed. She had fallen asleep, which meant she was in that darkness that Mike knew she hated passionately. But there was no talking her out of it. Eleven had a kind heart, and she was well aware that Troy was just an angry kid, used as a pawn by her Papa and his men.

Mike sat there for an hour until Eleven started to stir. Her hands gripped the pillow tighter until her knuckles were white, and she started whimpering. Mike slid closer, taking her hand from the pillow and holding them in his lap, brushing his thumbs over her knuckles.

"Come on, El, come back to me," he pleaded quietly. "El, come on." She jerked up like she always did when she snapped out of it. Her arms immediately flew around Mike's neck and she collapsed in tears against his chest. He let out a disappointed sigh. "Hes gone, isn't he?"

"Its my fault," she sobbed into his tee shirt, holding onto him tightly. Mike rubbed her back gently. "It was bad, Mike. He was... It ripped him up." He knew it was a bad idea, he knew it. Either she found him alive, and she wanted to help, or she found him dead and that guilt only hit her harder. Mike was a little glad he was dead. Better that than to suffer there, running, hiding, freezing like Will did all those years ago. Not to mention what followed even if Troy was saved.

"Eleven, better him than you," Mike said quietly. She leaned back to look up at him in shock. He was gentle and kind. Eleven could hardly imagine him being so cruel, even to Troy. "El, don't look so surprised. If I had to choose between you and him, I'll always choose you. If his death means you get to live, then I would have done myself if I had to."

"Why?" She demanded to know, smacking his chest lightly and pushing away. "Why?"

"Why? Why am I glad he's dead?" Mike scoffed at her. "Because I love you, El. Because I don't want to live in a world without you in it anymore. He tried to take you away from me. If he'd lived, he would have tried to do it again."

"Love?" She blinked at him, her attention obviously falling on that words. Eleven heard it before, but she never really knew what it

stood for, what it meant. Mike nodded, leaning forwards to quickly place a kiss on her forehead.

"Yes. It's when you like someone as more than a friend. When you like them more than anything at all. You love them. Like I love you," he explained. Eleven hugged his waist tightly, laying her head against his chest again. He was always her greatest source of comfort. The sobbing stopped, and the tears slowed, then dried on her cheeks.

"I love you, Mike." She sniffed, then crawled into his lap entirely. Mike welcomed her into his arms, cradling her because he knew she needed it. "He's gone. Forever."

"Which means he can't hurt you anymore, El. Never again. That's one less evil out of this world."

"One less evil," she repeated, though only the fearful part of her agreed. She understood that she had sat back and watched a life being taken out of this world, then destroyed in the next. Eleven wasn't over her guilt, not completely, but Mike certainly took away some of that heaviness that settled in her chest.

A/N:

It's a little bit fluffy again, but being sick makes it hard for me to push any sort of plot XD so I just decided to focus on the aftermath of everything Eleven is still going through. Its all new to her, and she's struggling. Hope you enjoyed anyways! Your feedback is always loved and appreciated :)

11. Chapter 11

Chapter 11:

Nancy was just about to leave when the diner door pushed open and he stepped in. The nerves that she had managed to overcome rose within her all over again, and she began tapping her foot nervously as she sat there. Her grip on her coffee mug tightened despite the dull heat that was still there against her palms and fingers.

He walked over, hands shoved in his pockets, then sat down in the booth across from her. He offered a polite smile, though they both felt a little odd being there together. After all, Nancy was engaged to Steve, and their wedding wasn't far off now.

"Johnathan," she cleared her throat, trying to keep up the front she usually used when speaking to him, "I was starting to think you weren't coming."

"Will had an episode," he explained, his voice low and a little more solemn than Nancy would have liked. "He's alright now. Some days are worse than others, you know." Nancy nodded,

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be. He's learning to live with it. He said Eleven has been helping him," Johnathan explained, sitting back against the seat. He glanced over at the waitress, Sam, an old friend of Will's. She came over quickly, then took Johnathan's order, though it was always the same when he came in. This time, though, he ordered a water instead of a soda. "Thanks, Sam," he smiled, and she nodded before heading back to put in his order. Nancy watched their interaction from behind her coffee, taking a slow, careful sip as they talked.

"She's pretty," Nancy noted, and Johnathan shrugged his shoulders. "Come on, Johnathan, you can't be alone forever. You should ask her out." Her chest tightened when Johnathan glanced back over at Sam, though she wasn't entirely sure what she expected. It was her idea; she was the idiot who brought it up to him even though she would prefer that he didn't ask her out.

"She's got a thing for Will," Johnathan said after a minute, and Nancy relaxed a little. "I tried to tell him, but Will doesn't think anyone would be interested in him since he has those fits. I think more than anything, he doesn't think anyone else will believe him." He sighed heavily, then leaned forward with his elbows on the table. "Truth is, I don't know that anyone will believe him. Or any of us. Sometimes when I think back, part of me still thinks it's too crazy to be true."

"I get that. I feel the same way sometimes. For a little while, I convinced myself that maybe it was all just some... side effect to LSD in the water supply or something. But Eleven is back, and she reminds me just how real it all was," Nancy said, pushing her now empty coffee cup to the edge of the table to be refilled by Sam when she came back around.

"How's the wedding coming along?" Johnathan asked out of nowhere. Nancy stared blankly for a moment, unsure of how to answer or how the topic took such a dramatic turn. She took a deep breath, then sat back with her hands in her lap. "I'm sorry," he said, convinced by the silence that Nancy wasn't comfortable with that question. "I didn't mean to say something to upset you. I was just wondering."

"It's coming along fine, I guess. Steve wants something really big and fancy, if you can believe it. Wants all his little buddies there, and an open bar, and yada yada," she rolled her eyes. "I'd be more comfortable with just us and our families down at that little white church on Maple. Mike and I loved that place when we were kids. When Mom used to take us, we'd always sneak out back to the woods and sword fight with sticks. He was so little, so I always won."

"I believe it. I've seen you handle dangerous weapons, Nancy," Johnathan teased, and she chuckled with him. "In fact, I remember you once waved a gun at your fiance." She laughed,

"Oh, sometimes I still bring that up to him. I'd never seen him so scared. Anytime he pisses me off, I always threaten to go get my gun." Johnathan smiled at that, since it was something he could definitely imagine Nancy saying. She'd changed so much over the years, slowly turning into the thing that she and Johnathan both hated. It was a relief to know that there were still some parts of her that hadn't disappeared into the emptiness of adulthood.

"I'm glad you still have a sliver of a sense of humor."

"Have I really changed that much?" She asked, her eyebrows furrowing in concern. Johnathan hadn't expected that reaction, and he looked down at the table with uncertainty. "Mike says I act like an old married lady now. I'm not sure I like the sound of that."

"Won't that be what you are one day?"

"Doesn't mean I have to act like one." She stopped talking as Sam returned to refill her coffee and hand Johnathan his. He thanked her quickly, then turned back to Nancy, who obviously had more to say and was just waiting for privacy. Nancy tore open a packet of sugar and dumped it into her coffee, reaching for another shortly after. "The closer it gets to the wedding date, the more I wonder if this is the life I want."

"If you're doubting it, then it probably isn't," he told her honestly. Nancy dropped her gaze, her cheeks flushing with shame. "It doesn't make you a bad person to rethink your decisions before you make them," Johnathan tried to reassure her. "Just think it through. Marriage is a hell of a thing to commit to when you don't want it. Do whatever you have to do to figure it out, and do it soon." It was the best and only piece of advice he could offer her without sounding too happy about her indecisiveness. He would prefer she didn't marry Steve and disappear completely into the void of being a stay at home mother, like Steve wanted. Nancy was too headstrong and smart for that.

She stared down for a minute, thinking. Johnathan looked around anxiously, worried that he had said something yet again to upset her. All of a sudden Nancy leaned up, over the table, grabbed Johnathan by the jacket, and pulled him to her. Nancy pushed her lips to his, quickly and roughly, and after a few seconds, pulled away. She stood up immediately, snatched up her purse, threw down a ten dollar bill, and practically ran for the door. Johnathan sat there in stunned silence, dumbfounded by what had just happened. Was she just curious? Did she want to see how it felt in comparison to Steve? Johnathan didn't like that idea, but if it somehow made her decision clearer, he was okay with it.

Eleven spun around in Hopper's desk chair out of boredom. She'd been there for hours while Mike worked. At first, she had been sitting out in the lobby, watching curiously as they brought it a couple of criminals. There had only been two that came in handcuffs, and she recognized that as a really bad thing for really bad people. When one of them struggled free and tried to run for the door, Eleven casually tripped him with some focus, sending him flying to the ground. Mike looked up from his seat at the desk, then over at Eleven.

As much as she tried to act normal, she couldn't hide the tiny droplet of blood coming from her nose. With a groan, Mike got up, handed her a tissue, then led her back into Hopper's office. He asked her sweetly to stay there, and to not use her powers unless there was a dire emergency. Eleven agreed, but she was terribly bored the rest of the time she spent in that office. While she understood that Mike wasn't going to ever leave her alone after the incident with Troy and Papa's men, she wished there was something there to keep her occupied.

Luckily, Mike's shift had ended. He clocked out, said goodbye to his coworkers, then went back to retrieve Eleven. She was more than happy to jump up from the spinning chair and rush towards the door. Eleven was so eager to get back to Mike's apartment that she beat him to the car. She still had to wait for him to get close enough to unlock it, but she didn't mind. It was finally time to go home, and she could have Mike's attention again.

Once they were back at the apartment, Mike headed back to the bathroom to take a shower. Eleven lingered out in the living room for a minute, staring mindlessly at the TV, though her thoughts were elsewhere. She looked back at the bedroom when she heard the sound of the water running. She took her bottom lip between her teeth, nibbling on the soft flesh for a moment.

"Mike?" She called his name. He didn't answer, probably because he could hear her over the shower. The door was likely closed, too, most of the way if not completely. Eleven tried to focus on the TV, and the woman that was speaking on the screen, but she couldn't. Not really. Eventually she gave up, and she got up from the couch entirely. "Hey, Mike," she called as she walked towards the bedroom. She paused outside of the bathroom door. "Mike?"

"Hm?" He called back, and she thought carefully about what to say next.

"Can I come in?" She asked.

"Uh. Sure, I guess. You still bored?" He joked a little. Eleven pushed through the door, then closed it behind her. She leaned back against the sink, just staring at the shower curtain with a nervous curiosity. Mike was on the other side of it, undressed, a state in which she had never really seen him before. He always at least had pants on when he was around Eleven.

"A little," she answered, dropping her eyes to the floor. "It's better with you."

"You can sit in here if you want," he told her, not really thinking much of it. He knew that she had been going crazy with boredom at the station while he was working. Hopper was giving him smaller shifts without docking his pay since Eleven was being hunted, which Mike would be eternally grateful for. The bills had to be paid, and he didn't want to have to move back in with his mom, especially now that he had Eleven staying with him. Privacy was preferred.

"I want to take a bath, too," she said, and again, Mike thought nothing of it.

"Alright, I'll leave the water on when I get out," he shrugged, dipping his hair under the water to rinse the shampoo away. He reached for the body wash, but he stopped when the curtain slid back a little. "El?" His eyes widened as she stepped in, completely undressed. Mike turned around until he was facing the wall opposite of Eleven. He looked down at the drain. "El, what're you doing?"

"Taking a bath. With Mike," she said, her voice riddled with nerves. "Is this... bad?"

"No, I mean... I just didn't expect it, that's all." He cleared his throat, then collected himself. Mike turned back around, then stepped aside to let some of the water fall on Eleven. "I keep forgetting to stop and get you some girly shampoo and body wash. Maybe the kind Nancy uses, I don't know. She could probably help you with that." The

innocent conversation didn't do much to change the intimacy of the situation, though he thought it wouldn't hurt to try. Eleven stood still, hugging her upper body, eyes fixated on her bare feet.

"I'll get out." When she went to reach for the curtain, Mike quickly grabbed her wrists.

"No, El, it's okay. Couples shower together. It's normal."

"Couples?"

"Yeah. Two people that love each other. Not as family or friend. They're a couple," he explained, drawing her closer to him. He shifted so that she was standing under the water. "Here, tilt your head back," he told her, and she hesitantly obeyed. Mike ran his hands through her hair, under the hot water, making sure that it all got wet. He leaned back, grabbed the shampoo, then squirted some into the palm of his hand. "You seem to like it when I wash your hair for you," he smiled at her, and Eleven smiled back, her nerves starting to fade. She brought her head out of the water so he could lather the shampoo into her hair.

"Yes," she agreed with a nod. "I do." He chuckled to himself, then led her head back into the water, massaging the shampoo through her hair and making sure it all got rinsed out. Mike took a deep breath as he felt an all too familiar desire start building in his chest. She was standing in front of her, bare, completely exposed to him now. It was getting more and more difficult to keep himself under control. Especially when Eleven started to look at him, to really look at him, from his head to his toes and everything in between. It was like she was studying a foreign specimen that she found intriguing.

"That," she said, pointing to his lower bits. "Your intimate parts." She remember some of what he explained to her before, about people who loved each other and intimacy between the two. Mike flushed, his cheeks burning with embarrassment.

"Yeah," he cleared his throat, quickly taking her by the shoulders and turning her towards the water. "Don't stare like that Eleven. It's making me self-conscious." She blinked, then removed his hands from her shoulders and turned back around. She lifted herself on her toes,

kissing him the same way that he had kissed her a couple of nights before, with the same heat and the same passion.

"Don't hide, Mike," she told him, lowering herself back onto her feet. He stared down at her, lips slightly parted in shock. She was being so forward, so brave in her actions. He wasn't used to it, but he understood it to some extent. He had done the same things with her.

"El," he breathed, keeping her pushed back a little. "I have to stay in control, so you can't get too close."

"Why?"

"Because I'll-"

"So?" She cut him off quickly, cocking her head to the side a little as she looked up at him. "Two people that love each other. They can be intimate. So we can."

"It's a little more complicated than that, El. It's not that easy. There's timing. Everything is better at a certain pace, and I want to make sure that you're... that you're more than ready, El. You don't understand any of this."

"Seems easy. I love you. You love me. Easy." She didn't want to wait around forever for another amazing experience like the one she had with Mike, after the attack. The bruises were fading, the marks had become lighter and hardly noticeable. If he wanted to hold her and to touch her that night, then she didn't understand why he wouldn't want to once the ugly bruises on her face went away. Eleven hugged him around the waist.

"El," he whined, not particularly fond of how close she was, or how she was pressing into him, her bare chest on his, her hips slightly lower than his. "Remember what I said. About your first time. You never get it back."

"I don't want it. I want you to have it."

"Are you sure?" He asked her, hoping she was more than certain, but also well aware that Eleven was still innocent, still naive and ignorant to the things that were involved with intimacy and sex in

general. "It will hurt at first. Maybe we should wait."

"Why?"

"Because, El."

"Do you want to?" She asked. Mike groaned with frustration, bringing his hands up to his face. His body was reacting to hers, and he quickly pushed her back by the shoulders. "Mike-" This time, he interrupted her. He snatched her up, holding her with her legs around his waist and her arms around his neck. He stepped out of the shower, then made his way to the bedroom.

A decision had to be made in that short bit of space between the bathroom and the bed. Mike's mind was running wild with thoughts, with worries, with desires and needs, but most of all with what was going to happen in that moment, when he took the one thing from her that she could never get back. If he took it. There was still time, a very little amount of time, but time nonetheless. He could still turn back, still get dressed and make sure she was plenty satisfied while saving the real intimacy for later. But when was later? How long was Mike going to keep treating Eleven like a glass angel? Mike's time to decide was running out, his feet were quickly closing the gap between him and the bed, where he was either going to lay down with her, or where he was going to leave her while he went back for clothes. There was no time. He had to decide now. He had to.

Some more Mileven fluff/drama because I know you guys love that stuff. So! Big decision about to be made :) What do you guys think? Wait a little longer? Or just give in? Decisions, decisions... Lol thanks again for all your more than lovely reviews. This story is only so good because you guys encourage me like crazy to write and give me ideas all the time. I've never had a story on here that I've written steadily get such well thought out, and sweet reviews :) It means the world. Let me know what you think and see ya next chapter ;D Wonder what you guys are gonna pick...

12. Chapter 12

Chapter 12:

Nancy stormed out of her house, eyes wet with tears, red from holding them back until she was alone. She stomped down the steps, her jacket slung over her shoulder, fumbling for her purse for her keys. When she heard the front door swing open, she stopped and whirled around on her heels.

"Leave me alone. I want to be alone for a little while," she said sternly, eyes burning with the fire of her frustration. Steve stood, chest heaving with his own anger, staring down at her from the top step of the porch.

"Where the hell is all of this coming from? Huh?" He demanded to know, trotting down the last two steps so he was standing level with her. "This morning you seemed fine. What, did your little meeting with Johnathan Beyers give you cold feet?" Her face drained of color, and she looked away from him. "Yes I know. I know exactly what happened."

"You don't understand, Steve," she shook her head at him, crossing her arms over her chest. "This is leading to the exact kind of life I never wanted. I'm not meant to be domesticated."

"Then what are you going to be? Hm?" He scoffed at her. "You gonna be the type of girl who sleeps around because she doesn't want to get married? The kind of girl that picks up shitty jobs as a waitress or bartender because she doesn't want to stay home with a kid. Is that the kind of life you want?"

"I can get a good job. And I can damn well take care of myself," she seethed, glaring at him hatefully. "How dare you."

"How dare I? It's not like you went to college, Nancy. You've never had a job, because you were fine with me footing the bill until now. You think Johnathan is going to give you the life that I have? Taking pictures for the newspaper and still living with his mom. What the hell do you want with him? What can he give you that I can't?"

"A choice!" She snapped. "Some freedom. Some encouragement and respect and everything else you haven't been giving me, Steve." She turned and started towards her car.

"Yeah, go ahead and try, Nancy. See if life with him is any better. When you realize you're fucking yourself over, I'll be here." He sulked back into the house and slammed the door behind him.

Nancy got into her car, and she started crying. Instantly. Tears fell and sobs rocked through her. She still didn't know if she was making a huge mistake, but she didn't want to be anyone's caged bird. Nancy just wanted to feel free again, not bound to anyone by any sort of contract. Marriage was supposed to be for life. She couldn't afford to settle anymore.

After a few minutes of calming herself down, Nancy pulled out her phone and dialed Mike's number. She wanted somewhere to stay. However, he didn't answer. It was a little late. He was probably sleeping. She dialed the number of the only other person she could turn to.

"Hello?"

"Johnathan?" She said his name softly, not wanting to reveal too much of the emotion in her voice. "I... I need a favor."

"What's up, Nance?"

"Steve and I had a fight... I need a place to stay. If I go home, Mom will throw a fit. She won't understand, and Mike isn't picking up. Johnathan, please. Is there any way I can come stay with you. I'll sleep on the couch or the floor, I don't care."

"You can sleep in Mom's room. She's gone, staying at Hopper's tonight. Come on over, I'll pour you a drink."

"Thank you," she sniffed. "So much. I owe you big time, Johnathan."

"Don't worry about it, Nance. Just come on. Let's get you calmed down, and we'll go from there, alright?"

"Alright." She flipped her little cell shut, then tossed it into the seat

beside her, starting the car and taking off.

Just as Eleven's back made contact with the mattress, Mike's house phone started to ring on the nightstand. Eleven looked over at the little device, and it slid to the floor, then under the bed, muffling the annoying sound.

"Easy, El," he whispered in her ear, sending chills down her spine. "No powers here. Remember?" He sat up with her, holding her against him, his palms flat on her back, exploring the skin over her spine as he kissed her heatedly.

"Mike," she panted between kisses. "How bad?" He leaned back to look at her, confused by the question. Mike wasn't sure what she meant. "How bad will it hurt?" She clarified. He took a deep breath.

"I honestly don't know, El. I wasn't Cathy's first. It only hurts in the beginning, then it'll feel good, okay?" He reassured her, tucking a loose strand of hair behind her ear. He kissed her again. "I'll be as slow and gentle as possible. I promise."

He laid her back again, and Eleven stared up at him, trembling a little with anxiety and fear of what would happen, of what it would feel like. Mike pulled her leg away from the other, carefully sliding in between them. He looked up at her one last time, like he was waiting for her to back out, to decide she wasn't ready to do it.

Instead, Eleven gave him a small, shaky nod. Her hands gripped his biceps tightly in anticipation, her body starting to squirm as the waiting became more frustrating than anything else.

"Mike," she pleaded, moving her arms around his neck to pull him down, closer to her. "I'm ready. Its okay."

"Alright, El. I'll do it then." He hesitated again, wishing so badly that he could somehow keep from hurting her while giving her what she wanted. If he pulled away, if he decided not to allow himself to go all the way with her, she would think that it was because of her, that it was her fault. Mike couldn't get out of it without hurting her one way or another. Better to go the way that was quick and temporary.

The resistance was almost enough to keep Mike out anyways. As he tried to push into her, Eleven let out a sharp cry, then a gasp. Her body fought against him, making it more than difficult to make it happen. Her hands latched onto his shoulders, and her nails started to dig into his skin.

"Ow, Mike, ow," she whined, squeezing her eyes shut.

"Do you want me to stop?" He asked, keeping his hips still for the moment. She shook her head at him, lips pressed together tightly to hold back anymore cries of pain. She didn't want to discourage him, to make him stop for fear of hurting her. Eleven was ready to be a woman, to be Mike's woman, and she needed him to break that last barrier.

"Don't stop," she told him, opening her eyes to look up into his. He could see her determination, the desire. After a moment of thought, Mike started putting pressure against her again, slowly but surely starting to slip his way into her.

It did hurt. It hurt badly for every bit of Mike that was invading her. She tensed up, but somehow she managed to bite back the sounds of pain and discomfort that her body wanted to make. After the pain, the sensation was just odd. He stayed still for a painfully long amount of time, letting her adjust to him.

"Are you okay?" He asked. For the first time, Eleven looked up at him. His jaw was tight, teeth grinding together, and his breathing was ragged. Her eyebrows furrowed.

"Are you?" She asked him in response, reaching up with a shaky hand to run it through his hair, then rest her palm on his cheek. Mike nodded against her hand.

"It just... it feels so good, El," he panted, staring to move his hips back again. She let out another gasp; she didn't expect him to pull back so soon. Maybe it was over already. She hoped not.

Her fear were out to rest when Mike pushed his hips forwards again, and she could feel her body stretching to accommodate him. For a brief moment, it was painful again, but then it slowly started to ease.

Eleven's chest rose and fell rapidly, as did Mike's.

"Better, El?" He asked breathlessly. She nodded at him, so Mike started moving his hips in a rhythm. Eleven laid back, eyes closing as the sensation slowly changed from odd to pleasant. Better than pleasant.

She trusted Mike with everything. Even in the beginning, when it hurt, Eleven trusted that Mike had told her the truth when he said it got better. This is what he was talking about all along, about lovers and intimacy and the first time. Part of Eleven wished she had been Mike's first time, since Cathy was such a mouth breather, but she didnt care as long as Mike stayed with her only from now on.

"Mike," she breathed his name, a soft moan escaping her lips. When she brought a hand up to cover her mouth, Mike quickly caught her by the wrist.

"Don't," he told her. "Let me hear you." Eleven nodded her agreement, not able to find the words as the pace of Mike's thrusts quickened.

Mike was trying to be gentle, trying his hardest to stay in control. It was just so amazing. His first time with Cathy was nothing like it was with Eleven. Cathy had already been with other boys before Mike, so she didn't feel so... constrictive. She didnt squeeze him the way Eleven was, and it was driving Mike crazy. He wanted to let go and get a little rough, but he didn't. Eleven wasn't ready for that, and despite all of his urges to do so, he stayed careful and gentle with her. Because he loved her and wanted to make sure she was okay first and above all else.

"Mike!" She cried out, her hand grabbing onto his arms again. "Mike, that feeling..."

"Almost there already?" He chuckled. While he was teasing her, Mike couldn't deny that he, too, was approaching his limits. He wasnt used to it, to this feeling, and it was pushing him to that edge that he never managed to get over with Cathy.

Suddenly, Eleven's back arched upwards, catching him off guard. Her whole body tensed and tightened around Mike, forcing a groan of

pleasure from him as she constricted around him.

"Mike," she whimpered his name again. As she convulsed, Mike was shoved to that edge and over it. He pulled away quickly, turning as he reached the peak of their intimacy, his climax. Eleven sat up on her elbows, still panting hard and shaking a little from that overwhelming sensation. It was even better than the first time Mike brought her to that feeling.

Mike sat back on his legs, bringing a blanket across his lap. He looked to Eleven, who was surprisingly smiling at him. Her cheeks were flush, her hair a little messy, but she looked absolutely stunning laying there, eyes sparkling with a newfound maturity.

"Was that...?"

"Yes," Mike grinned. "You got me there, Eleven." She looked absolutely delighted to know that. Eleven got up and practically flung herself at Mike, arms around his neck and chest pressing into his. Mike caught her with an *oomph*, but she was always welcome in his arms.

"I love you, Mike," she told him, her chin resting on his warm shoulder. He kept his arms around her, holding her closely because there was a time when he never thought he'd hold her again.

"I love you, El," he told her, smiling to himself. She really was everything he ever wanted, everything he could have dreamed of. To Mike, Eleven was perfection, even with her adorable innocence. Though, Mike wasn't sure how much innocence would remain after he took part of it from her.

He didn't care. While Mike insisted that Eleven choose carefully for her first time, it would have killed him if it had been anyone else. Luckily, it would seem that Dustin was right. Eleven cared for Mike only, and that wasn't going to change any time soon. It was a relief to know he was her first, that she willingly gave him the one piece of her she could never get back. She trusted him with it, trusted him with everything, and he wouldn't let her down.

They laid next to each other once Mike slipped into a pair of boxers.

Eleven threw on his tee shirt, and sank down into the mattress beside him. She snuggled up close to his side, and he welcomed her. He wondered if he ever would have been this happy had Eleven not come home. Mike seriously doubted it since Eleven was his first and true love. No one could ever replace her.

"Was it better?" Eleven asked all of a sudden, and Mike looked down at her, quickly figuring out what she was asking him. He leaned over to kiss her forehead gently.

"Well, I never got there with Cathy," he told her honestly. "She never, ever felt as good as you did, El. You are... Perfect."

"You, too," she told him, settling down again. That seemed to be enough for her. The content smile on her face told Mike she heard all she needed to hear to put those nasty insecurities to bed. He was glad of it. Nothing could compare to Eleven. He wanted her to know it.

Hey guys! Had to write this on the app so sorry for any typos or anything! if I get feedback in time, ill update again later :) sorry for torturing you guys! hope you enjoyed!

13. Chapter 13

Hey guys! Sorry I didn't get a chance to update last night. It was a really busy night, and I was doing some editing and writing on the forum I run :) which does include stranger things lol so if anyone is ever interested in that, just PM me! Enjoy the chapter, my lovelies, and let me know what you think :)

Mike woke first the next morning. His eyes blinking away the sleep only to see Eleven there in front of him. She looked so peaceful while she slept. He reached over to push some stray hairs from her face, smiled to himself, then got out of the bed.

Stretching his arms over his head, Mike walked to his dresser and put on a tee shirt with his sleep pants. Once he was dressed, he headed for the kitchen, wanting something to drink and maybe to make Eleven some Eggos for when she woke up.

However, when he stepped into the living room, he was greeted by two men in suits coming through his front door. Mike started to turn back around, but the one closest to him quickly raised a gun. Mike stopped, putting his hands up so he didnt incur the wrath of the bullets in that gun.

"Where is Eleven?" the man with the gun asked. "Is she here?"

"No, not right now. I don't know where she went. Maybe to get some Eggos," he said with a frown. The gunman stepped closer, aiming the gun directly at Mike's head. He sucked in a deep breath, admittedly a little afraid in that moment, for Eleven and for himself. "I'm telling you the truth."

"I'll check the rooms," the second man said, walking around the gunman. Mike quickly stepped in front of him.

"My girlfriend is back there. She doesnt know anything, so just leave her out of it." Mike was trying his hardest to be convincing, to lie to protect Eleven. "I told you, Eleven isnt here." Then man pushed past Mike anyways, and he hoped Eleven could handle herself.

"Let me guess. You're here on behalf of Brenner," Mike said to the gunman, who just stared back at him. "I thought he died until Eleven said you came for her. She also said you guys are terrified of the Demogorgon. The monster."

"Shut up," the man grimaced.

"In fact, I'm almost positive you won't shoot me because it'll draw that thing here." Mike had an idea, a stupid idea, but an idea more or less. He dug his nails as deep as he could into his palm. He winced, and the gunman shook the gun in his face.

"Cut it out." He looked towards the bedrooms for his comrade, and when he looked back, his eyes widened as a drop of blood fell from Mike's palm and splashed against the floor. "Johnson, we need to go! If she's there, just grab her."

"I told you she's not here. But the Demogorgon will be soon." Mike didn't know for sure, how could he? It was a risky plan, but a risk he'd take for Eleven. He remembered her saying it was scared of her, and that it wouldn't attack her head on. It had to sneak around her, and when it came before, it only took Troy. Maybe this could be used in their favor.

"Fine, if you insist," he pulled the trigger, to Mike's surprise, and there was a sudden blinding pain in his shoulder. Mike cried out and fell to the ground, on his knees, reaching to his shoulder where blood was staining his shirt.

"Mike!" Eleven screamed, running from the back room. She stopped when she saw him, her hands coming up over her mouth and her eyes wide. Her eyes flitted to the gunman, who was aiming at her now.

"Where's Johnson?" He asked her, and Eleven shook her head at him in response. "You killed him? Did you kill my partner?!" He was seething, but Eleven didn't care. All she could think about was Mike. However, the blood spot under her nose made it very clear to everyone that she had done something to the other man.

The gunman aimed it back at Mike, and Eleven gasped in response.

She rushed to him, placing her body in front of his with her arms outstretched to block him. Mike put a bloody hand on her shoulder to try and move her to the side, but she didn't budge. Her eyes narrowed at the man.

He was surprised when nothing happened, but just when he started to feel relief, Eleven's focus brought the bullet from Mike's shoulder. He yelled out in pain, but clenched his jaw shut tightly to hold it back. The gunman never saw the bullet until Eleven sent it straight through his chest.

The gun fell from his hand, and the man hit his knees. Just as one threat had passed, another arrived. The lights began to flicker. The wall split open, the all too familiar black ooze speaking over the wallpaper around the center. Eleven stood up, pulling Mike up by his uninjured arm.

"We need to go."

"El, easy," he warned as another sharp pain tore through his shoulder. "I'm still bleeding." Her wide eyes fell on his wound, watching in horror as the blood fell to the carpet. She let go of his arm, afraid of hurting him anymore.

Eleven figured the monster would chase them, no matter where they went. Mike's blood would act like a beacon to it. In her mind, that only left one option. She would protect Mike at all costs, like she had all those years ago.

She stood and walked to the opening in the wall, knowing that the monster would be coming out of it any moment. She focused as hard as she could, ready to take it down, even if it meant sending herself back to the Upside Down.

"Eleven, no!" Mike shouted, and she just looked back at him. "Don't do this to me, El." He staggered forwards, feeling dizzy and weak. His blood trailed along behind him. She shook her head, and her attention turned back to the wall as a long, grey, slimy limb extended from within. Its bony finger-like things gripped onto the wall, and it began pulling itself from the hole.

Eleven was too focused, too frightened to notice Mike moving closer to her. A fear had gripped him unlike any other, even more than all those years ago when she did the same thing she intended to do in that moment. When she sacrificed herself, Mike lost a huge piece of himself. It took seven years to get her back, and he couldn't stand the thought of that again.

"I won't let you," he said as he got closer, and Eleven finally looked to him. He grabbed her with both hands and shoved her as hard as he could backwards. She stumbled, then fell flat on her back. Eleven tried to scramble up to her feet, but when she sat up, she saw those terrifying bony fingers wrapped around Mike's arm.

"Promise you'll find me," he pleaded, a tear slipping from his eyes. "I'll fight if you promise."

"Mike, no!" She screamed in terror, lunging forwards. Another slimy grey limb snaked around his waist. "I promise! I promise!" She cried out just as Mike was yanked through the wall. She tried to rush forwards, but all she hit was solid wallpaper. Her hands were covered in slime, but she didn't care. Eleven beat her hands against the wall, sobbing and still shouting Mike's name. "No! No, no, no." She slid to the ground, the slime from her hands smearing down the wallpaper.

She didn't have long to act. Mike was bleeding, injured, and trapped in the Upside Down with that monster. He said he would fight, but Eleven had to keep her promise. She had to go in after him, no matter what it took. She had to save Mike.

Sorry it's so short. I wanted to finish it and make it longer but it's been an awful day and I'm freaking out so... hope you enjoy anyways and the next one will be longer, I promise guys. I'm sorry.

14. Chapter 14

Chapter 14:

Johnathan brought Nancy a cup of coffee from the kitchen, setting it on the table in front of her since the mug was still hot to the touch and he didn't want her to burn herself. She looked tired, and she was staring into space like she was deep in thought about something.

"You okay?" He asked her quietly, trying to keep the conversation private despite the three boys eating cereal in the kitchen. Lucas had just gotten there that morning, and the lanky boy insisted that they get something to eat. The drive, he said, had made him awfully hungry.

"Im fine," she lied. Her eyes finally refocused on his, and she could see the concern behind them. "I just... dont think I'm ready for this. Marriage and all... Its supposed to be for life. My mom doesnt believe in divorce, so if I backed out later she'd be so mad. She's already going to be upset that I don't want to settle down..."

"I remember a Nancy that didn't care so much about what her mom thought," Johnathan commented with a small smile. "I wonder what happened to her."

"Everyone had a lot of expectations for her," Nancy admitted honestly. "She got tired of rebelling against it all."

"It's okay to make your own decisions. Its your life, and you're the only one who has to live with them." He put a hand on her shoulder, and she nodded. Nancy grabbed her coffee mug and sipped at it carefully.

"I always wished I had chosen differently. I figure... you wouldn't have pushed me to get married and have babies and be a stay at home mom and trophy wife. That's what Steve wants. You never wanted that."

"I just wanted you. As you are."

"Do you still?" She asked, looking up at him questioningly. Johnathan blinked at her, a little caught off guard by her question. He knew he had to answer carefully.

"I thought you weren't interested."

"If I was?"

"Then yes," he admitted, staring directly into her eyes. "If I still have a shot, I will let myself want you again. As badly as I did before." He looked at his feet. Nancy admired him for a moment. He really had grown into a handsome man. His hair was shorter now, more maturely styled, and his facial features had sharpened, his jaw more defined, his eyes a little darker.

"I want to leave Steve."

"I want you to leave Steve."

"But where will I go?"

"Here. Until we can get a place together." He'd thought about it so many times. "You want a job. When you get one, we could afford a house like the one you're in now. Mom wouldn't mind if you stayed with us for awhile." Nancy smiled at that. She adored Will and Joyce, especially after everything they went through together. She nodded. "Is that a yes?"

"Yes," she beamed, and Johnathan grinned excitedly. "I'll talk to Steve later tonight."

Johnathan leaned forwards to kiss her, but a loud, frantic knock on the door startled them both. The chatter from the boys in the kitchen quieted, and Johnathan got up to answer the door. When he pulled it open, a frantic Eleven came through the door. Her feet were bare and dirty, and her footsteps left blood in their wake. It was obvious she had run all the way to their house and her feet were raw.

"Eleven?" Nancy stood, smoothing her skirt quickly before walking to the panicked, sweaty girl. "What's wrong?" The three boys hurried from the kitchen, and they all stared at her with wide, worried eyes.

"Mike," she panted heavily, her chest heaving so hard that she nearly doubled over, completely out of breath. "Demogorgon. It took Mike."

"Mike's in the Upside Down?" Will asked, stepping forward, pushing his way past the other boys. He of all people knew how dangerous it was there, how little time they had before he became affected like Will. Eleven nodded.

"Help. Please," she begged, tears falling down her dirty cheeks. Johnathan knew what it meant. One of them would have to go in after Mike. "Blood," Eleven added, laying her hand over her shoulder where Mike was shot. "He's hurt."

The others all looked amongst themselves, but the solution was obvious. Johnathan and Dustin were the strongest. They had to go in after him, and Nancy and Lucas had to be waiting outside of the gate for them, ready to pull them all out.

"Bath," Eleven said. "Will, help me." The sickly boy nodded. Eleven wanted to find Mike, to lead him back to the others, to comfort him while the rescue was going on.

"Is there an opening somewhere in the woods?" Johnathan asked Eleven, and she gulped.

"Near Mike's. In a tree."

"I better go," Nancy said. "Dustin can't fit in a tree, and I've been there before. Dustin can wait with Lucas. I'm going in with you Johnathan."

"I don't want you going in there."

"Johnathan, it's my brother. Dustin is built like a truck. He won't fit through," Nancy said, propping her hands on her hips. "Don't waste time arguing with me. Get your gun, and bring me my bat. You still have it right?"

"By my bed," he told her. "Be right back." He left to go retrieve the weapons from his room, and Will took Eleven by the wrist and walked her into the bathroom. He started the water, and she waited by the edge of the tub impatiently.

Lucas and Dustin went to the kitchen. Dustin, who had gotten into some trouble in his first year at college, quickly grabbed the bottle of liquor from the night before. He stuffed a rag down into the bottle, then headed back into the living room.

Johnathan came back, and he handed Nancy the bat with nails jutting from all directions. She twirled it gracefully in her hand, taking a deep breath to ready herself for the fight she knew she was going to have to face.

"Let's go then."

Once they were gone, Eleven slowly lowered herself into the tub. Will put his hands on her shoulders, empathy and concern in his expression. He slowly pushed her back into the water, submerging her up to her ears. He pulled his arms back, resting his palms against the cold tub, anxiety starting to flood through him.

"Find him," he told her. "Hurry."

She nodded, then closed herself and let herself drift into the silence, into the dark, little by little becoming emerged in it. She felt like she was sinking and floating all at once, until her eyes shot open, and a familiar little fort sat directly in front of her. It was where she found Will seven years ago. Mike must have remembered.

She approached it slowly, not liking the cold water against the raw bottoms of her feet. Her discomfort didn't matter, not when Mike's life was at stake. She bent down, then crawled into the little fort. Mike was sitting there up against the back wall, his face pale and nearly drained of all color. His lips were blue, and his hand was holding onto his shoulder. If his chest wasn't rising and falling rapidly, she would have thought he was dead.

"Mike," she frowned, reaching out to touch his arm. His eyes fluttered and opened slowly. He reached back to her, brushing hair from her face.

"You shouldn't be here."

"You made me promise. I said I'd come. I'd find you." She frowned at

him. "I promised." She crawled until she could sit right at his side, taking his hand in hers. "They're coming. Hold on."

"They?"

"Nancy and Will's brother."

"Eleven, no," he shook his head tiredly. "Stop them. Don't let them come in here. It's still out there. Don't let Nancy come." Eleven said nothing else. She just sat there, then laid her head on his uninjured shoulder, holding onto his arm and rubbing it gently.

"Stay, Mike. Don't sleep."

"I can't. If it finds me, I have to run."

"They will help. I need you," she sniffed, holding onto him a little tighter, a knot forming in her chest. "I love you."

"I love you." His voice was hoarse and quiet, but it still retained the same sweetness he always spoke to Eleven with. "I won't leave you. I'll keep fighting."

"I should come."

"I'd rather you didn't."

"I can fight." She closed her eyes, relaxing against him as tears fell down her cheeks one by one. "I can help."

"You are. Even if you're not really here... I'd be much happier if I died with you by my side."

"No." Her eyes shot open and she looked at him. "No, Mike."

"You have to understand it's a possibility, El. I've lost so much blood. The cold made it stop quicker, but... I may not make it. If I don't, you need to stay with Nancy or Will. They'll look out for you, and Nancy knows how to help you with girl things. She knows you like eggos, and she'd make you some every morning."

"Stop," Eleven pleaded softly. "Mike, stop it."

"I hope you don't find someone else to love, but if you do, make sure he treats you right. Don't let anyone hurt you anymore, but don't break anyone's arms okay? Boys can be stupid sometimes when it comes to pretty girls. I know I can." He smiled half-heartedly. Eleven shook her head,

"Only Mike. I won't find another boy. You'll make it." She clung to him a little harder.

"But if I don't--"

"You will," she cut him off. Mike sighed.

"Just know I love you. Every moment with you was... amazing. With Cathy I wasn't really happy. She didn't love me, not really. She loved what I did for her and what I could give her. The sex wasn't good. She was... boring in every way. But you... You're just so amazing and beautiful and you always make my heart race."

"Stop," she begged again, squeezing her eyes shut. "Stop it."

"I want you to know."

"Tell me when you get back."

"I may not get back, El. I have to say it now. I love you," he put it simply so she wouldn't argue anymore. "So much." She said nothing. All she could do is sit there, hold onto him, and wait until Johnathan and Nancy came through, until they found him. The knot in her chest grew with every passing moment of silence, the only sound was Mike's rugged and increasingly slowed breathing. Eleven was starting to panic. Time moved so slowly. Mike was coming in and out of it. Her world began and ended with him. She couldn't lose him. She just couldn't.

"I can't lose you," she cried against his arm, though he was a little out of it and couldn't respond. She still needed to say it. "I need you. Mike, please don't go. Please." She got as close as she could to him, holding onto him tightly as her body shook with her quiet sobs. "Please, don't leave me all alone." He couldn't answer, and she wasn't sure he could hear her. But it was true, so so true. The idea of a

world without Mike terrified Eleven. It seemed dark and lonely. "I need you," she said one more time, "I love you. Don't go."

I got into a better mood and my muse came back. :) I know it's a bit of a cliffhanger, but there's a lot more so I had to split it up between two chapters. Hope you guys enjoyed! Keep letting me know what you think :D you guys certainly helped me get to feeling better today, so thank you. Your reviews never fail to make me smile. Til next chapter, my lovelies!!

15. Chapter 15

Hey guys. Sorry it took so long. Some stuff happened between me and my forum friends, and I had enough. I'm a very loyal friend and if people aren't loyal in return, it hurts. Anyways. I'm having to delete the forums i have now. I'm hoping to start a new one, but I cant invite hardly any of the people I had before. So if anyone reading this gets on FF often, and would be interested in a multi fandom RP forum, including Stranger Things, just shoot me a PM. Love you guys, enjoy the chapter. Pretty please review. Thanks, lovelies.

Chapter 15:

Eleven left the darkness, left Mike, though she didn't intend to stay away for long. Eleven jolted up from the bath water, startling Will, who had been sitting there with her very patiently. She scrambled over the edge, picking up her soaking wet body enough to drag it to the door.

"Eleven, wait," Will said, standing to help her steady herself so she wasn't stumbling around in a panic. She leaned on him, but only for the moment, only until her slippery feet found dry flooring. "Where are you going?" He asked as she pulled away from him. Eleven looked back, eyes full of determination.

"To get Mike." The door flung open, and Will stood there, stunned, not really sure that he'd ever seen her use her powers like that. He took a few steps forward, but she was already running down the street, her raw feet pounding against the grass as she ran as fast as she could back towards Mike's. He knew he should have stopped her, but how could he when she could just fling him aside like she did with the door. It was obvious that nothing was going to get in her way. Nothing.

Nancy cursed under her breath as she squeezed her way through the sickening goop that clung to the tree and all around the hole that looked burrowed into the bottom of it. It took them longer than they had hoped to find it, but once they did, Nancy and Johnathan got

down to force their way inside, armed and ready for whatever danger they faced.

"Keep moving," Johnathan whispered from behind her. She sped up the rate of her crawl, knowing he must have been even more uncomfortable than she was since he was bigger. Nancy finally pushed through to the other side, into the Upside Down she hoped to never return to. Johnathan was quick to emerge behind her, struggling to his feet with a load of curses of his own.

"Now we have to walk all the way back. Without dying." Nancy took a deep, shaky breath. "Can we do this?"

"Of course we can. Mom and Hop came in after Will before. We'll find Mike. Come on." He took her by the hand, squeezed it reassuringly, then started pulling her towards where Johnathan knew Fort Beyers would be. He'd rebuilt it for Will after everything, and he remembered that Will hid there when he was trapped in the Upside Down. It kept him safe, so Mike went there, too. It made sense. Where else could he hide from that thing?

They kept their weapons right by them, ready and willing to fight their way to Mike and back. Dustin and Lucas were standing guard by the entrance. It made Nancy feel a bit better to know that they were out there. While she wanted to hurry, she also knew they had to move slowly and carefully. They had to be quiet and not attract attention.

"How much further?" Nancy asked as they walked. Johnathan shrugged,

"Maybe ten, fifteen minutes."

"We should speed up a little. Eleven said he was bleeding." Nancy swallowed in fear, hoping her brother wouldn't already be gone when they got there. She loved Mike. After everything that happened seven years ago, they became a lot closer as siblings, a lot more appreciative of one another. Nancy was instrumental in helping Mike get over Eleven, or at least to move past that aching pain he faced every day. He could never get over her, never forget how she made him feel. Mike could only let himself start to live again, start to ease

that heartbreak.

"Almost there," Johnathan said, pulling Nancy from her thoughts. Some time had passed since they last talked, since she started imagining how horrible she would feel if she lost Mike. She would blame herself for years, and she would never be able to deal with it, not really.

"There it is," she said, pointing up ahead at the little wooden shack like structure. Nancy hurried a little faster, and Johnathan stayed on her heels. She quickly ducked down and crawled into the fort. Mike was there, slumped over and pale. His chest rose and fell slowly, barely noticeably. Nancy scurried to him, taking him by the shoulders and shaking him gently. "Mike, please. Wake up. Come on, we have to get you home."

He didn't move. While Mike was still alive, he had lost an awful amount of blood. The cold had made him even weaker, and he lost consciousness before they ever arrived. Nancy didn't know how long he'd been out, or how much blood he lost. She feared the worst, and Johnathan, who had crawled in behind her, wasn't too much more optimistic.

"Mike, please, I-" A hand cupped over her mouth then, and Johnathan moved closer to her, quietly hushing her in her ear. Nancy froze, eyes widening as she looked up. A dark shadow moved along the outside of the fort, blocking the light from entering the cracks of the woods whenever it lurked. There was a low, guttural growl, and she recognized that sound anywhere. Nancy heard the click of Jonathan's gun, then they were startled by a loud roar.

The wooden door structure splintered, then cracked inwards. A long grey, slimy arm burst through, its long clawed fingers reaching down into the fort, grasping for anything it could get its hands on. Johnathan pushed Nancy back, away from the claws, then shot two rounds into the monster's arm. It squealed, then jerked back.

The silence that followed wasn't a relief. They waited anxiously, both trembling as the monster paused for the moment. Then, suddenly, the wooden roof was practically knocked aside, forcing out the nails that were holding it together. When the monster bent over the fort,

opening its large, fang filled flower-shaped mouth, Nancy swung the bat as hard as she could. It connected with the side of the Demogorgon's head, and it scrambled backwards.

"Johnathan, grab Mike!" She told him. Johnathan bent down and shouldered Mike's weight, struggling to hold onto the unconscious boy and the gun at the same time. "We need to go. Come on." Nancy remembered the way. She started running, slowing a little to keep pace with Johnathan, to protect him and Mike both.

They made it a good bit of distance before the monster caught up. When it did, it swiped Jonathan's legs out from under him, sending him and Mike to the ground. He tried to get up quickly, but it shoved him down again, its bony limbs reaching out for Mike. Nancy was quick with the bat again, and Johnathan followed it up with a shot to the creature's abdomen. It snarled angrily, let out a pained hiss, then lunged for Johnathan.

"No!" Nancy screamed, but luckily, the monster never made it to Johnathan. It was suddenly cast aside in mid air, thrown into a tree like a rag doll, causing it to yelp like a wounded animal. Nancy and Johnathan both looked up to see Eleven there, eyes focused intently on the monster. Johnathan took the opportunity to snatch up Like again.

Eleven picked up the monster again with her thoughts, her intense will to save Mike, then there it backwards as far as she could until it collided with a tree. The three of them, with Mike, made a break for the entrance, getting there before the monster could recover. They squeezed out of the opening one by one, Eleven coming out last.

Nancy fell to her knees with Mike, holding him in a relieved embrace, though he was still out cold. Eleven stood, then swayed. Dustin and Lucas went to grab her, but she fainted before they could get their hands on her. The last thing Eleven saw before fading out was Mike coughing, stirring, coming back to life again.

"I'll call an ambulance," Johnathan said, rushing towards Mike's house. Nancy told him where the spare key was hidden so he could get inside, but she stayed right by her brother.

"We should get her inside," Lucas said to Dustin. "I don't want the cops to bother with her right now. When she wakes up, she's only going to care about one thing." Dustin scooped her up in his arms, his thick, burly build making it a lot easier. He nodded back to Lucas.

"I think you're right. Nancy, you're staying with Mike?"

"Of course."

"Is El okay?" Mike asked, though his voice was so hoarse and weak that Nancy hardly heard it. She looked down at him, as his dirt blood streaked face. She tried to smile.

"Eleven is just fine. She saved us. Saved you." She hugged him against her. "Help is coming, little brother. Just hold on for me, okay? Just hang in there." She rocked with him, though Mike wasn't hardly as concerned. He was out. He would live. He wasn't losing any blood at the moment, and more important than anything, Eleven was okay. She didn't die trying to save him, and she didn't disappear either.

She was the only thing that mattered at the moment. Eleven had kept him going, made him fight. If it wasn't for her, he may have given up in that dark, disgusting place. But he kept thinking about what it had been like when lost Eleven, and if he died, he'd be making her suffer that same, unimaginable pain, but she would have no hope. He would never return. It would hurt even more because she would know that he wasn't coming back. No, Mike had to live. For her, for his family, and for his friends that came to his rescue. For all of them.

Hopper was the first one on the scene, as could be expected. He rushed to Mike, asking everyone what happened when Johnathan returned. He pulled Hopper aside once the ambulance got there to pick up Mike. Johnathan told him everything, knowing that the sheriff would understand, that he had been through this exact thing all those years ago. Mike had to be saved, there was no way around it. No time to call for help. He would have died if it weren't for Johnathan, Nancy, and of course, Eleven.

As Mike was loaded onto the stretchers, he looked tiredly up at the house, his apartment, where the curtains to the front window had been pulled back. Eleven was sitting there, watching him from the

other side of the window, her hands pressed against the glass like she wanted to push through it and run to Mike. She didn't want to be kept from him.

But to keep Eleven safe, to make sure the news and police report didn't somehow get back to Brenner, Mike knew that she needed to be kept from the cops. They would ask for a statement, and Eleven wasn't well equipped for intricate lies like that. Hopper, Mike, Johnathan, and Nancy would handle it. They could talk, agree on a story, and focus on selling it.

Still, it hurt Mike a little more to see that longing, that pain in her eyes as she watched him from a distance. He could see just how badly she had worried, and how desperate she was to get to Mike again, to be near him and be there to support him. All she wanted was to kiss his cheek and tell him it was okay, that she was glad he didn't give up.

But all she could do is stare from the window as he was loaded up into the ambulance. He lost sight of her, and when the doors were pushed shut, she lost sight of him. They both felt a simultaneous pain in their chests, like they'd been connected, and that connection was suddenly and painfully broken by the closing of those doors. Eleven stayed by the window, staring out until the ambulance and its annoying siren and flashing lights had disappeared down the road, Hopper's cop car trailing behind it with Johnathan and Nancy inside.

On a more positive note, you guys leave the most amazing reviews. I have the best readers and I can't thank you enough! Love always ~~~ Lynne.

16. Chapter 16

Chapter 16:

Eleven was practically bouncing with excitement when Lucas's car pulled into the driveway. Dustin and Will watched with amusement as she waited by the door like a loyal puppy, waiting for its owner to come on. Her hands were clasped together down by her stomach, fidgeting a little with her obvious impatience.

She waited for four days to see Mike. In the time that he was taken to the hospital, Eleven had only gotten a single phone call, which had been rather brief. While she understood that they were keeping the information from her Papa, she still hated that she couldn't be with him while he went through surgery, recovery, and whatever else he had to deal with. Eleven hated hospitals, and Mike was the only thing that made the experience bearable. But she couldn't do the same for him.

She slowed a little, her body seeming to relax as soon as that doorknob turned. Mike came through the door first, as if he'd known she'd be right there waiting for him to reassure her. Her chest tightened with excitement, and a smile replaced the impatient expression that was there before it. Mike grinned back at her.

"Miss me?"

"Yes," she answered simply, rushing to him, hugging him tightly by the waist, since his shoulder had been injured. She was sure it was still sore and didn't want to make it any worse. "I'm so happy."

"Me, too," he sighed with contentment, hugging her against his chest in return. He leaned down and kissed the top of her hair, running his fingers through her tangled waves to loosen them. Eleven hadn't cared much since Mike was gone. She didn't try to brush her hair like the boys taught her, and Will only talked her into taking a shower once, the second day Mike was gone. Nothing could give her a satisfying distraction, and Dustin even commented that she was painfully loyal.

"Good to see you up and around," Dustin said from the table. Will had gone home earlier that evening, but Dustin and Lucas stayed behind until it was time for Lucas to go get Mike.

"Yeah, well, he wasn't really supposed to go home today," Lucas said, making a very disapproving face over at Mike, who pretended not to notice. "He fought with the doctor about it until he gave up and let him go." Eleven leaned back to look up at Mike for an explanation. Even though she was glad to be home, Eleven wanted to make sure that Mike was okay at least.

"It's not a big deal," Mike told her, though she wasn't entirely convinced. "They just wanted me for more surveillance to make sure there's no after effects from the blood loss. But I'm fine. If it was serious, they would have made me stay."

"You better take care, Mike. Otherwise, I'll have to shoot you again just to get you sent back," Dustin teased, grabbing his jacket from the back of the kitchen chair. "Guess we should head out. Let you two spend time together."

"See you tomorrow, Mike," Lucas said as they both headed for the door. Mike glanced back over his shoulder with a smile.

"Bye guys. Thanks again, Lucas."

"Yeah, yeah."

The door closed, and a peaceful silence settled down over the apartment. Eleven stared up at Mike, and he stared back. After a moment, he put a hand on her cheek and bent down to kiss her softly. Her eyes fluttered shut, her body melting with the warmth and familiarity of his touch. She had missed that affection. No one else but Mike could give her any.

"We're the guys good to you?" He asked softly when he pulled away from the kiss. Eleven longed for that feeling again, but she nodded anyways. "I'm glad. They're pretty great guys. I knew they'd take care of you. Even if I didn't come back."

"You did," she frowned. "You're back." Eleven pulled herself closer to

him, resting her cheek against his chest, listening in on his heartbeat. Mike ran his hand over her hair, letting her stay there for as long as she wanted to, as long as she needed.

"I fought. Like I promised."

"I know." She took a deep breath. "I was very scared, Mike. I was scared you wouldn't come home. You always have to come home."

"And I always will. I promise." He took her hand into him, sliding away from her but pulling her along behind him. "Come on. Come lay with me, El. I could use a good night's sleep, which won't be too hard since I'll have you beside me."

"Me, too," she agreed with a small smile. She let him pull her back to the bedroom, then down onto the bed with him. He started to take his shirt off, then winced. Eleven understood. She always seemed to be able to understand why people feel a certain way pretty well. With steady hands, she carefully eased his shirt up off of his arms for him.

Her eyes fell on the large white bandaged taped over Mike's shoulder where the bullet had gotten stuck in his flesh. She could only imagine how much that must have hurt, and she wished she had done something to stop it. Mike followed her gaze.

"It'll be a pretty nasty scar when it's all said and done," he tried to joke, though Eleven's serious expression made it clear that she didn't find it very funny.

"Not nasty," she shook her head, refusing to believe that there could be a part of Mike that wasn't absolutely perfect in her eyes. She loved every part of him, and that scar, the result of him offering his life in exchange for hers, to save her, was something that Eleven imagined would be very beautiful to her.

"You came in after me," he said, drawing her attention back to his eyes. "I hoped you wouldn't, but... I owe you a thanks at least. You saved my life, and Nancy and Johnathan, too. We all owe you."

"No." Eleven squeezed his hand. "You don't." Mike laid back on the bed, and Eleven curled up on the side without the bandage, being

careful not to hurt him.

"It's nice, isn't it?"

"Hm?"

"Having people who would do anything for you. Even sacrifice themselves or rush into danger just to protect you." Mike looked down at her. "Nancy and Johnathan. I was honestly surprised they were so quick to rush in there after everything..."

"They love you."

"Would that have made you feel any better if I died? That at least I sacrificed myself out of love." He raised an eyebrow at her, and her silence gave him his answer. "I don't want anyone I love risking their necks for me. That includes you, El."

"But-"

"I would prefer that I die instead of you," he told her honestly. Eleven grimaced.

"Me, too."

"I'll never let you," he chuckled, rolling over onto her, kissing her forehead, then her nose, then her soft, impatient lips. She beamed up at him, her cheeks flush, her eyes lit up with pure adoration. He could look into those eyes and see just how much he meant to her. "You're not allowed to sacrifice yourself. Not for me or anyone else ever again. I lost you that way once, and I can't handle it all over again." While he'd been playful before, his tone turned a little serious.

"I'm staying," she said again, though she'd told him that same thing many times before them, when he mentioned it. He was living with a constant fear that in a split second she'd just be gone again, running and hiding and being afraid for however many more years she let herself suffer. Mike couldn't imagine that pain, not that he was grown and he was genuinely in love. He bet it felt like having your heart and soul ripped from your body.

"I missed you," Eleven said in an attempt to change the subject and to

bring it back to what mattered to her, Mike's return home. Those four days away from him had been awful, driving her nearly mad while she waited impatiently for his return. The boys tried everything from video games to movies to board games, but she could only focus on Mike, and on wondering when exactly he would be coming home.

"I missed you, too," he reassured her, brushing her tangled hair from her face. "Every moment you've been away from me, from the time we met, I missed you. I don't think I'll ever stop. Especially not now."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean... Crushes are all well and good, but... now I love you deeply, like a man, and it would be a whole hell of a lot more painful to lose you when I feel like this." He rolled back onto his side, welcoming her against him. "And you love me like a woman..."

"I am a woman," she told him with a mischievous grin. "You should let me be." She rolled so she was on top of him, laying on his chest, her knees on either side of his hips. "Like this?"

"However you want," he smiled.

TO BE CONTINUED. Hey guys! Sorry its late :) but better late than never. I wanted to split this up again so I can include a Nancy and Johnathan aftermath scene next chapter, as well as a little bit of relieved intimacy from Mileven. Hope you guys enjoyed, and hope it was worth the wait :) I know next chapter will be ;) hehehe

17. Chapter 17

Hey guys! Meant to have this done last night but I passed out before I could finish :(I'm sorry... BUT. I've finally got a chance to sit down and finish it today :D I wanted to make sure I at least got it to you guys before tomorrow. I try to update every day or every other day, and never longer than that if I can help it. Thanks again for all the amazing and wonderful reviews. You guys don't know how much they mean to me, especially right now when things don't seem to go my way very often. At least I have you guys :) So thank you. Keep leaving them, and I'll keep posting every day/every other day :) With that said, enjoy, my lovelies!

Chapter 17:

Nancy sat at the end of Johnathan's bed, swinging her legs back and forth mindlessly. He'd gone out to check on Will after hearing him have one of his coughing fits, so Nancy just waited patiently in his room for him to return. It reminded her of that one night he stayed with her all those years ago. She remembered being so afraid after encountering the Upside Down and the monster that lurked in its darkness, and she also remembered how much comfort his presence brought her even then. It seemed that was one thing that hadn't changed in all these years.

"Sorry," he said as he came back into the room, pushing the door until it was only cracked a little. "Some nights are worse than others for him, but he's doing okay now." Johnathan had a bundle of blankets in his arms, and he dropped them on the ground, bending over to pick one up and spread it out over the wood flooring. Nancy frowned, then got up to stop him.

"It's your bed, Johnathan. I'll take the floor."

"No, I don't want you to. Just let me," he said back to her, continuing to spread out a pile of blankets on the floor at the foot of the bed. Nancy watched for a moment, not sure how to find the right words in that moment.

"Why can't we just share the bed? It's not like we haven't before..." She blushed a little, but she really didn't want to put him out of his bed just because she was staying there. He'd offered to let her stay in Joyce's room, but that felt weird for her. Nancy wasn't really all that close to Joyce, and it seemed disrespectful, since Joyce didn't know she was even staying there that night.

"Honestly," he sighed, standing up to look down at her, "I would really like to. Don't get me wrong. But... you're still technically engaged to Steve. That's a big commitment, and until you actually sit down with him and tell him it's over, I think I should be respectful. Steve isn't an awful guy, and even though I want to have you in any way I can right now, I shouldn't. So please, for me, just take the bed."

"That's sweet of you," Nancy said with a small smile, knowing that he was right, that she, too, should be respectful of the commitment she made to Steve, even though she was planning to break it off soon. Until she could have that talk with him, Johnathan was right that they needed to be careful about what boundaries they crossed together. Even though she hated it, she understood and agreed. "Thank you, Johnathan. I hope the floor isn't too bad."

"It's not, I promise," he reassured her, sinking down into his bed of blankets. "Will you hand me a pillow, Nance?"

"Sure." She reached to the bed and snatched one up for him, handing it down with a smile. "Goodnight then, Johnathan. Thank you for letting me stay, and for letting me have the bed. I can't imagine you're very comfortable."

"It's fine. Goodnight, Nancy. Don't worry about it. Any of it. You're always welcome here." He stared up at the ceiling once she disappeared onto the bed, thinking back to when they'd be in a situation like this before. Back then, he had no reserves when it came to Nancy, and he would have pushed as far as she let him because he had a crush on her. Now, things were a little different. For a very long time, Johnathan kicked himself for not telling her how he felt about her, for letting her be taken by Steve, though he didn't believe at the time that he had a chance. Nancy was a little more open about her opinion of him now, but back then, he thought she would never think of him as more than a friend. Oh how the times changed.

As Nancy laid in his bed, surrounded by the smell of his cologne mixed with the faint aroma of some kind of air freshener or cleaner that his mom probably used in the house, she couldn't help but think about what everyone would say when she started dating him. He and Will both had a certain reputation in the town. Will's episode made most people think he was crazy, and Joyce already had a similar reputation after everything that happened with Will and the Upside Down seven years ago. By default, Johnathan had earned that same public appearance.

Her family would be angry, she figured, that she gave up the life she had with Steve. They were engaged to be married, and Steve had a good job, a nice house, and Nancy would have never had to work for anything. That's what her mom wanted for her, and that's what she pushed for. She, more than anyone, was going to be disappointed with Nancy's decision. However, Nancy was an adult. She was rapidly approaching her thirties with every birthday, and the life she wanted wasn't what she was going to get with Steve. Johnathan could offer her the one thing she craved for years. A choice. A freedom to choose. That's what she wanted more than anything, and that was what made loving Johnathan worth more than loving Steve.

Eleven's cheeks burned with embarrassment as she fumbled to get Mike's belt and jeans undone. He watched for a moment, finding a little bit of amusement in the adorably frustrated face she was making. After a moment, it became clear she was getting really upset about it, so he reached down to take her wrists in his hands. She looked up in shame, her eyes gave it away immediately. Mike just smiled at her, soothing her embarrassment almost immediately, and he pulled her down into a warm, firm embrace. He brought her lips to his, pushing her hair back with one hand while resting the other on her thigh that sat against his side.

She was trying to do something for Mike, and he knew that. However, she was still going to have to be eased into everything, taught how it all works. He didn't mind the slow and steady way, since that was what she really needed. All Mike cared about was what Eleven needed, what made her happy, and what he could do to make her smile. He loved her smile, and he loved being the cause of

it.

"Like this," he said. Eleven leaned back and watched him easily undo his belt buckle, then pull it loose from his jeans entirely. He set it beside them on the bed, then reached down to pull the button apart. She nodded back to him, her eyebrows furrowing for a moment like she was angry that it was actually really easy, yet she still couldn't figure it out. "You're nervous," he explained to her. "Your hands are shaking." He took her by the wrists and lifting her hands to her field of vision. He was right. They were trembling ever so slightly.

"I'm sorry," she frowned, balling them quickly. Mike shook his head up at her,

"Don't be. You'll figure it all out little by little. There's no need to rush yourself, El. It's okay not to know how to do something you've never done before."

"I'll learn," she said with a heavy side. "Little by little...", she repeated the phrase he used, though she wasn't that sure what it meant. Regardless, she trusted Mike, and she trusted that he knew what was best in situations like this. "I want to learn. To make you feel good."

He looked at her for a moment, like he was thinking deeply about something. Then, he took a deep breath. Honestly, Mike didn't have much experience to share with her in regards to his own pleasure. Cathy was a selfish lover, and she only wanted to do what felt good for her. He knew how to make himself feel good, but not really how to teach someone else to do it. The determination and sadness in Eleven's eyes made it worth a shot, however, so he would try.

"Here." It was his turn to blush. Mike's cheeks reddened instantly as he reached down to take her hand in his again. He laid it over his boxers, over the part of him that hardened under her touch. She looked a little surprised by it, which only made him blush more. "If you rub right here, it feels good." Eleven looked up at him briefly, then started moving her hand back and forth over his boxers. He inhaled sharply, then closed his eyes to sink into the feeling.

"Like this?"

"Yes," he said with a shaky breath. It was odd. As inexperienced as Mike was, it was weird for him to be teaching someone else about things he didn't know a whole lot about himself. The difference was that Mike was taught these things, in school, by peers, and by the magazines that Dustin used to steal from the corner store when they first started high school. Besides that, there was television and movies and music to get a general idea from. Not to mention his experience with Cathy, though she never cared much about what was good for him.

Eleven's curiosity got the best of her. Her hand stopped for a moment, and she peeled back the band of his boxers. Mike looked at her face, at the inquisitive expression that blossomed from her curiosity. He couldn't help but smile a little. Then, she suddenly grabbed him, squeezed him, and Mike squirmed.

"Sorry!" She said, quickly retracting her hand away from him. "Did I hurt you?"

"No, no, El," he chuckled a little. "That's what you're supposed to do. It felt good." She grinned down at him, her legs still on either side of him. Eleven looked genuinely excited, pleased that she had figured out what to do all on her own. She reached for him again, taking his "intimate part" as he referred to it, in her hand again. She squeezed lightly, then began rubbing her hand over it, up and down, like Mike had told her to do before.

It was euphoric. In all the times that Mike had been with Cathy, she never did anything for him, not sexually, not in any way really. He was so surprised that it could feel so different when someone else was doing it for him. He struggled to steady his breathing, and his chest rose and fell rapidly as Eleven worked her hand over him repeatedly. His reactions gave her an idea of what she was doing right, and what rhythm made him squirm the most. A smile grew on her face as she watched him, his body tense, his eyes closed and lips slightly parted as he breathed heavily.

"Like this?" She asked again, and all he could do was nod. If he even tried to speak, Mike knew that he would let out a sound that he had never made before. It didn't take long, maybe only ten minutes, before he couldn't take anymore. Eleven was caught off guard when

Mike sat up suddenly, and her grip on him tightened in response. He grabbed onto her, hands gripping her lower arms tightly as he went over that edge, into pure ecstasy. He let out a long, unsteady breath, then let his head fall on her shoulder. Eleven turned to kiss his cheek, keeping her hand hovering just above her lap for the moment.

"Like that," he said with a small smirk, leaving his forehead against her shoulder for the moment, trying to catch his breath. "Sorry it's so messy. It's just kind of how it is for boys." She brought her hand to her shirt, then used the fabric to wipe it clean.

"Doesn't matter. Mike felt good."

"Very good," he told her. "That's never happened to me before. Not like that."

"Really?"

"Really." He sat back so their eyes could meet again, and he saw every bit of pride and excitement in her eyes that he expected to see. "No one else has ever made me feel like that," he promised her, and she believed him instantly, which only made her swell with ever more pride. He leaned forwards and pressed a soft kiss to her lips, then to her cheek. Eleven beamed happily when his lips left hers.

"Now I can love you like a woman," she said, moving to the side so she could lay beside him. Mike bent over the edge of the bed, snatching up a dirty tee shirt to quickly clean himself up so he could hold Eleven the way he wanted to. Once he came back up and relaxed into the mattress, Eleven moved closer so she could lay her head on his chest. "I'm glad you felt good."

"Me, too," he told her, and he really meant it. He was glad she was able to make him feel like that, because if she wasn't able to, he knew that it would have made her pretty upset. She would've been disappointed in herself, and she would have thought it was her fault that she couldn't, even though it may not have been. While he had every bit of confidence in her that he could, it was still nice to know for sure that she could bring him to that climax with little to no help. It was good for Eleven, and that was what Mike cared about the most.

"Mike."

"Yeah?"

"Did you ever... well..." Eleven trailed off, and Mike became a little concerned with what she wanted to ask him. "With Cathy. Did you ever... miss me? Or... think of me?" He rolled onto his side so he could look her directly in the eyes. It was a question he didn't expect her to ask, but when he really thought about it, he figured it was normal to be jealous of Cathy, to be a little jealous that there had been someone else in his life, however unsatisfying it may have been. Eleven never had anyone else, but Mike did, for a little while, and of course that made Eleven nervous and curious. Of course she would have questions. At least this one was easy to answer.

"All of the time," he admitted shamelessly. "I couldn't stop myself from comparing other girls to you. I mean... they all seemed so dull after everything we went through. There was so much excitement with you, so much fun and adventure. As a kid, what more can you ask for, ya know?" He reached up to push her tangled waves behind her ear and away from her face. "I was so bored with her. I always thought of you, and what it would have been like if you never disappeared. I'd wonder if we would have grown up together, and if we would have been together all these years, or if you would have been more interested in someone else."

"No. Never."

"I know," he grinned, "but I still wondered back then. Even when I was with her, in bed, and we were being intimate... as awful as it was, sometimes I would wonder if it would have been better with you. I thought about you all of the time, Eleven, everyday, no matter who I was with or what I was doing. It was impossible to forget about you, and I never wanted to, even though it killed me to miss you like I did."

"I'm sorry, Mike..."

"Don't be. You must have suffered so much worse, El," he frowned. "You're here now. That's the most important thing. I don't have to wonder anymore, I know for a fact. I love you. I want to be with you,

and you want the same. And you are definitely, without doubt, so much better than Cathy in every way, than every other girl I've ever been even slightly interested in. Does that make you feel better?"

"Yes. Thank you." She seemed content with what he said, and it seemed to comfort her completely. She laid against him, and he welcomed her into his arms. Her warmth lulled him into a deep slumber, and she went right along behind him. There were no nightmares, no Upside Down, no nothing. Just quiet, peaceful, simple sleep. In his arms, she felt safe, indestructible, and that kept her mind at ease, kept it from wondering to those dark far off places. In the morning, she would likely worry that Will had been there, left alone, but for the night, for the first time in a long time, she got some real, uninterrupted rest, something that she had needed desperately, and something she could only get with Mike there beside her.

I did it :D finally. Thank you, "Guest," for the extra encouragement! You weren't signed in, but thanks! Hope you guys enjoyed the chapter! I really hope it's all that you wanted and more :) I try to give you all what you want to see, that's why your reviews are so important! Let me know what ya think, lovelies.

18. Chapter 18

Chapter 18:

"Alright, Mike," Dustin cleared his throat, doing his best to sound absolutely sober as he began his question. "Truth or dare?" They'd just started this incredibly childish game, not having much else to do until Hawkins Electric Co. figured out this whole blackout thing. The guys had come over for a movie and some drinks, and the power had gone out in the middle of it, not leaving them much to do. Lucas was the one who actually suggested they played truth or dare on the grounds that Eleven had never played it before. It was an experience that Lucas said she just had to have at least once.

"Uh, truth," Mike said, taking a sip from his beer. He wasn't too keen on the idea of letting his friends embarrass him somehow in front of Eleven, though she probably wouldn't have thought any less of him if he had to do something stupid like streak or whatever. Either way, better to avoid the possibilities and just answer a question. Dustin gave Mike a devious grin.

"Okay, then. Have you and Eleven done it yet?" Dustin asked with an evil smirk. Mike's face lit up red instantly, from his cheeks all the way back to his ears. His eyes dropped to the ground, then glanced over at Eleven, who was sitting beside him at the kitchen table.

"Yes," she told Dustin before Mike even formed a response. He dropped his head to the table. Having Eleven answer for him so nonchalantly didn't help the embarrassment at all. He let out a soft groan, then shook his head against the wood pressing into his forehead. "He means sex?"

"Yes, El," Mike groaned again, the blush spreading down to his neck now. The guys immediately started laughing. "That's exactly what he means." Eleven didn't seem phased by it at all, but Dustin, Lucas, and Will were chuckling among themselves at the situation. She just kind of looked around, trying to figure out exactly what was so amusing to them. To her, it was a serious thing, a beautiful thing that she and Mike did together, so she didn't understand what they were laughing at.

"Your turn, Lucas," Mike said, finally lifting his head from the table. He set his beer to the side, resting his elbows on the edge of the table so he could lean forward a little. "Pick one."

"Since I'm not a bitch," Lucas teased his friend, who just rolled his eyes in response, "I pick dare."

"I'm bad at deciding these."

"I got one," Will spoke up, sitting across from Mike. "Lucas, I dare you to switch clothes with Eleven. Not in front of everyone of course," he turned to Eleven. She was humorously enough wearing a spaghetti strapped white dress that had a ribbon that tied at the waist. Mike cringed inwardly at the image of Lucas in a dress. That was kind of embarrassing stuff he wanted to avoid having to do in front of Eleven. Again, she was oddly unphased.

"I should change in private," she said, though it sounded a little like a question. It brought them all back to that moment when they first met, when she tried to change right there in front of them. Mike nodded,

"Yes, El, in private." A spark of jealousy made his response much more immediate, so she stood and headed for the bedroom.

"You can just give her your shirt, Lucas. It'll long enough to be a dress for her since you're so lanky," Dustin teased him.

"Bite me, Tubs," Lucas shot back, getting up to strip off his shirt. He handed it to Eleven, who took it with her to the bedroom. Mike let out a sigh, not sure whether or not he really like the idea of this. It seemed like a double dare, partially for Lucas and partially for Eleven. Not to mention he didn't want to play the stupid game to begin with. It was a kid's game, and he didn't really want Eleven involved in it.

Eleven came out of the room a couple of minutes later in nothing but Lucas's shirt, which was excessively long on her, and what she was wearing underneath it. She handed her little white dress over to Lucas, who let out a long, disapproving sigh before slipping it on over his head. He stood there, arms dangling at his side with an intense

expression of distaste on his face.

"Happy, Will?"

"Quite," the boy chuckled in response, exchanging mocking glances with Dustin.

"Fine then, Will, truth or dare?" Lucas asked, his eyebrows furrowed with shame and a tad bit of playful revenge.

"Truth." He didn't even want to know what kind of terribly embarrassing act that Lucas would concoct as revenge for making him wear a dress. Lucas's evil expression didn't fade, and it only made Will more nervous.

"Perfect. I'm just curious, Will, and since you picked truth, I get to ask, and you have to answer. Since Eleven has been back, have you fantasized about her at all?" Will's face drained of color as Lucas's question. He knew the answer already. Will had told Lucas when he first arrived that Eleven had grown into quite the woman.

"I mean, I think she's pretty," Will tried to be vague.

"No, no. You know what I mean."

"Leave it alone, Lucas," Dustin said quickly, seeing the uncomfortable expression on Will's face. Lucas put his hands up, back off of the topic. Mike looked concerned, and his eyes stayed focused on Will for the moment. He cleared his throat, then got up to go get another drink from the fridge. Will got up, too, shedding his blanket to walk into the kitchen behind Mike.

"Don't listen to him," he said quietly so the guys didn't hear. Mike glanced back at him, then pulled open the fridge. "Mike, it's not like that. I don't have feelings for her or anything. All I said is that I thought she was good looking. Okay?"

Mike turned and handed Will another drink, offering a small, understanding smile,

"It's fine, Will. Seriously. I know she's gorgeous, and I know you guys see it, too. You'd be blind not to." Will relaxed a little at his words,

glad that Mike wasn't upset with him, though he thought for a moment he was. Mike put a hand on his shoulder. "Besides, I happen to know who you really have a thing for." Will blushed,

"How do you know?"

"Johnathan told Nancy, and well she's not too good at keeping juicy secrets. The waitress you like, Sam, she likes you, too. Maybe you should ask for her number, Will. Can't hurt to try."

"You really think so?" He asked Mike hopefully.

"Yeah, man, I'm positive." He bumped the bottom of Will's bottle with his, then lead the way back into the dining area. Lucas mouthed an apology to Will, who waved it off. Everything was fine, and no one got upset, not really. They all regrouped at the table, everyone with a full drink, excluding Eleven, who Mike still wanted to keep away from alcohol for awhile.

"Will, it's your turn to ask."

"Uh, Eleven. Truth or dare?"

"Dare," she said, having a decent enough idea of how the game worked now. Will thought for a moment. He didn't really want to embarrass Eleven as much as he just wanted to include her in the game somehow. He wished she'd picked truth because that would have been easier, but regardless, he had to come up with something for her to do for a dare.

"Eleven, I dare you to have a drink with us."

"I don't think-

"Okay," she nodded, heading to the refrigerator where she knew Mike had stored all of the bottles. She grabbed one, bringing it back to the table. She handed the bottle to Mike to open for her, but he hesitated. "I want to try," she told him with a small smile, knowing it was hard for him to tell her no when she set her mind on something. He sighed heavily with disapproval, but he popped the top loose from the bottle anyways.

Eleven had three drinks throughout the rest of the game and the time they spent all together. By the time everyone got tired and Will took them home since he was sober, Eleven was flush with intoxication. She wasn't drunk, but she was buzzing at the very least. Mike piggy-backed her to the bedroom playfully, while Eleven giggled behind him all the way there. He flopped down on the bed with her, rolling until he was laying on top of her, looking down into the big bright eyes that still held so much adoration for him. She smiled up at him.

"It feels good," she told him. "This feelings is... nice." She reached up with her hand, burying it in his shaggy black hair, letting the strands slide between her fingers. Mike sank into her touch, his eyes closing for the moment. "Did it bother you?"

"Hm?" He groaned a little, not really wanting to focus on anything but her touch, her hand burying itself in his hair, sliding down to his cheek, tracing his jaw with her fingertips. He turned his head a little to press a kiss to the inside of her palm.

"What they said about me. Does that bother you?"

"I don't want anyone getting any sort of feelings for you, but it's crazy to think that other guys won't see just how beautiful you are," he told her honestly, bringing his lips down to press a kiss to hers. "As long as they know you belong with me, and they can't have you," he whispered softly in her ear, sending chills down her arms, over her stomach, down her spine... She shivered a little, and Mike quickly captured her lips again.

His tongue slid over hers, and she playfully took his bottom lip between her teeth, something that Mike wasn't sure how she learned, but he definitely liked it. He kissed her yet again, heatedly, passionately, never wanting to take his mouth away from hers, wanting to share every breath with her, every moment locked their together in each other's arms. He took her hands in his, intertwining their fingers and pushing her hands down into the mattress on either side of her head.

The alcohol made every sensation that much more intense for Eleven. It was like nothing she ever experienced before. Just a haze of heat, tingling, and pure desire. Her legs wrapped around him, pulling him

closer. He held onto her hands, pinning them down, tightening his grip on them as their kisses became rougher.

"We should wait," he said breathlessly after a moment, pulling away from her entirely. Eleven let out a little whine, grabbing his arms and trying to pull him back down. "El, no. Not right now. I don't have a lot of self control, and I think I would hurt you."

"I trust you."

"I don't," he shook his head. "It would only be your second time. If I got too rough with you, El, it would really hurt. I don't want to do that, so let's just wait for tomorrow, okay? When I'm sober and not so desperate." He kissed her again, softer this time, letting his lips linger on her kiss swollen, strawberry flavored lips. He loved the way she tasted, and he almost decided not to stop. But it was best that he did.

"Do you want to get rough?" She asked him curiously.

"I don't want to hurt you, so no," he said honestly, moving to the side to lay next to her. "Not tonight."

"Another night?"

"Hm, maybe when you're a little more experience," he grinned, laying his hand over her stomach, slipping his fingers under the hem of Lucas's tee shirt that she was still wearing. Mike thought briefly about how funny it was going to be when Lucas woke up the next morning still in Eleven's dress. He let his fingertips trace small patterns on her bare skin under the shirt. "Maybe we should get this off though." He worked the tee shirt up, and she sat up to let him push it over her head. Mike dropped it to the floor, then pulled off his own. He tugged it onto Eleven, over her head, reaching up to free her hair from the collar for her. "Much better."

"Better," she agreed with a flushed face and a big grin. She ran her hands over his chest, down his stomach, feeling every inch of his bare skin that she could before stopping at the hem of his jeans. "I love you," she told him, throwing her arms around his neck and practically leaping up to hug him tightly. "I love you. Forever." He hugged her waist, kissing her cheek then resting his head on her

shoulder.

"I love you, too, El." She was a lovey dovey drunk, which was good to know. It was better than being a stupid or crazy drunk, which he'd seen before in the past. "I'll never love anyone but you."

"Promise?"

"Promise."

"Forever?"

He grinned, "Forever and ever."

Hey guys! So this chapter is really just some fun and fluff and a little bit of foreplay, three of my favorite things ;D I hope you guys enjoy, and I hope you didn't have to wait too long lol. Leave some lovely reviews if you would be so kind, and I shall use them as fuel for my muse to hopefully update again tomorrow instead of Thursday since it'll be Thanksgiving for some folks :) Thanks again for all your kind words, they really help me keep going with this story. Bye my lovelies! See ya again soon :D

19. Chapter 19

Chapter 19:

Eleven looked around all over, in awe of the large shopping mall around her. Mike wanted to take her on a date, so they finally left Hawkins for a little while, and he took her to the mall in the next town over for ice cream and window shopping, though if she really wanted something it would be impossible for him to say no to her.

She looked so excited to be there. A smile had grown on her face gradually from the moment they arrived. There were so many people and so many things to look at. Mike walked with her straight to the food court, and it was more crowded than he expected it to be on a week day. He let out a frustrated huff, then took her by the hand and took her to an empty table.

"Can you stay here for me?" He asked her, "I'm going to wait in line to get some ice cream for us, so I need you to stay here. Just don't leave, okay? I don't want to lose you in this mess."

"Okay," she nodded, pulling out a chair and sitting down. She kept her hands in her lap, and Mike left to go get in line. Eleven looked around at the people, interested in them and what they were doing. She noticed there were a lot of couples in the mall, and they all sat close and held hands and stared into each other's eyes. She assumed that's just how couples acted in public. Not too touchy, but enough to show they were together.

"Excuse me," a voice came from her right, startling her a little. When she looked up, there was a boy standing there, probably about Mike's age. He smiled down at her. "Are you here alone?"

"No," she shook her head.

"Oh, are you here with your boyfriend?" He questioned her further. He pulled out the chair beside her, and she shifted uncomfortably.

"Uh, I'm not sure," she answered honestly, having never really heard the term used before. She didn't know what it entailed. Mike was a

boy, but he wasn't her friend. He was more than a friend, so she didn't think that he meant Mike. Maybe he just wanted to be friends with her.

"Not sure? I'll take that as a no," he chuckled. "Name's Jesse. What's your name, beautiful?" She blinked at him when she heard that word. It was something Mike said to her a lot to make her feel good about herself. She didn't know why some stranger would be using that word.

"My name is Eleven."

"That's an unusual name," he grinned at her. "Don't think I've heard that one yet. She just nodded, looking around nervously. "Listen, Eleven, if you're not here with a boyfriend, then maybe you and I could take a walk around together."

"I-I don't know."

"You're cute," he told her, and she didn't like the sound of it. "Come on. I promise you'll enjoy yourself." He reached over and laid his hand on top of hers, brushing his thumb over it. Eleven stared at him, confused and nervous. She had no idea what she was supposed to do. "Alright, alright. Not the easy type I see. How about we start small? Tell me about yourself."

"My name is Eleven."

"Yeah," he laughed, "you said that already. What else? Who are you here with if you're not alone?"

"She's with me," Mike's voice came from behind them. Jesse turned, his grin never fading. He glanced back at Eleven, then stood up in front of Mike.

"You must be the not boyfriend."

"I don't see how it's any of your business," Mike grimaced, handing Eleven her ice cream cone. "You can move along now."

"The lady wants to walk with me. You don't mind waiting for her, do you, pal?" Jesse smirked at Mike, folding his arms over his chest.

"She's not going anywhere with you," Mike seethed, speaking through his teeth now. "Why don't you just get out of here, *pal*."

"Listen, kid, I get it. The lady said she didn't have a boyfriend. Don't feel bad. I'd be upset if I missed out on a hot piece of ass like that." This time, when he looked back at Eleven, Mike grabbed him by the collar. He yanked him away from Eleven and the table, shoving him roughly to the ground.

"Get the hell out of here," Mike nearly growled in anger, some kind of animalistic rage coming out of him like he never knew before. Jesse jumped up, and he lunged for Mike, but Mike had expected it. He stepped to the side and caught the boy by the jacket, shoving him down against the table, then flinging him back to the ground again. This time, before Jesse could get up again, Mike rushed around the table, snatched Eleven up by the wrist and pulled her out of the food court entirely.

Eleven stared over at Mike once they were in the car. She was taking slow and careful bites of her ice cream, not wanting to eat too much at once. They drove in silence for a long time. His jaw was tense, and she could practically hear his teeth grinding together. Eleven reached over to lay a hand on his leg, but he moved it away. Defeated, she retreated her hand back to her ice cream cone.

"Mike. What's wrong?"

"What's wrong?" He scoffed. "Are you kidding me, El? What's wrong is that guy was trying to take you away. He was going to walk off with you, and then how the hell would I know where you were? Where I could come get you? What if he took off with you, huh? He could have taken you back to his car and... and..." Mike trailed off, not even wanting to think about Eleven in a situation like that, scared and crying. He shook his head. "Why did you tell him we weren't together?"

"What?"

"You told him you don't have a boyfriend," Mike clarified. "So he thought he could just do whatever and say whatever and it was fine. Why would you say that?"

"Mike..."

"I thought we were together. Are we not? Do you not want me to be your boyfriend? Would you rather be with someone like Will? Or maybe Dustin."

"Mike!" She shouted, stopping his rant. He pulled into his driveway and shut the car off, gripping the steering wheel tightly with his hands, so tight his knuckles were white from the pressure. He took a deep breath, then looked over at her. She had stopped eating her ice cream, and it was melting, running down her fingers and dripping onto her thigh. "I didn't know what it was."

"What?"

"Boyfriend. I didn't know what it means." Her cheeks flushed and her eyebrows furrowed. Mike realized then what she was trying to tell him. His expression softened, his jaw relaxing. There was a look of guilt and shame on her face, and he suddenly felt awful for causing it. Mike unbuckled his seat belt then reached over, taking her face in his hands and kissing her roughly.

Then, he leaned back again and got out of the car. Eleven got out behind him, hurrying along to catch up as he rushed to the front door. He unlocked it quickly, then pushed through the door. Eleven came in, closed it behind there, then lingered there by the door.

"Mike, I'm sorry. Please don't be angry."

"Stop," he told her, turning to her again, rushing to her, lifting her, kissing her. He lifted her from the floor, and he pinned her back against the front door as he moved his lips over hers, hard and desperate. He spun with her still in his arms, making his way over to the couch where he laid her down, quick to move down onto her, between her thighs that were sticky with melted ice cream.

"Mike," she whined. She went to reach for him, but he snatched her wrists in his hands and pinned them above her head, moving his lips down to ravage her neck. She was panting now, squirming underneath him.

"I'm your boyfriend," he said in her ear, wanting her to understand, to know that she was his and he was hers and no one else could get in the way of that. "Say it, El."

"You're my boyfriend," she breathed. "I didn't know. Mike." She whimpered as he nipped gently at the soft skin over her throat. His lips travelled down to her collarbone, his grip on her wrists tightening.

"It means you belong to me. Only me. And no one else can have you." He sat back so he could look her in the eyes. "Do you understand now, El? You're my girlfriend. My girl. My love. And I'm your boyfriend. It means we're together, and no one else can have either of us."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be," he smiled then, which made her feel so much better. He leaned down to kiss her again, softer, with more love behind it than anger. "I should have known. You didn't understand, it's not your fault." He let go of her wrists, sitting back to run his hands down his face. He laid back against the couch, then pinched the bridge of his nose. "God, I'm such an idiot."

"No," Eleven argued.

"Yes," he said firmly. "I just saw that guy talking to you and touching you and I lost my mind. You don't understand relationships yet, not really. I forget that sometimes. I'm sorry I got so upset."

"I'm yours, Mike."

"Mm, say that again," he grinned up at her. "I like the way it sounds when you say it."

"I'm yours," she smiled, crawling so she was laying on his chest, hugging his waist tightly. "Only yours, Mike." He kissed the top of her head, rubbing her back softly.

"I didn't know I was the jealous type. Guess I'm just so scared you'll find someone you like better than me. I'm all you've ever known really, but there's so much out there."

"I don't care."

"I know you think you don't, but what if--"

"I. Dont. Care," she interrupted him, repeating herself more sternly than before. "I only want Mike. My boyfriend. Forever and ever." She looked up at him, and he could see it in her eyes that she meant it.

"I'm sorry, El. About the way I acted." He brushed her hair away from her face. "Im sorry if I hurt your feelings."

"I'm fine if you are."

"I am."

"I love you Mike. Boyfriend."

"I love you, too," he chuckled at her, knowing she was going to use that word until she thought Mike was satisfied. He kissed her forehead, then curled up with her on the couch, holding her closely, hoping that she understood he only got upset because he loved her, because he was still terrified of losing her. He felt guilty and ashamed of himself, but she seemed content, so he didn't say anything else about it.

AND HERE YOU GO MY LOVELIES. An ever requested jelly belly Mike :) I hope you liked the chapter! Sorry I was busy all day lol but I finally got some time! I'll update again tomorrow!! I know this chapter was centered only on Mileven, but if you're a jancy fan too, fear not, they will appear in the next chapter :) Hope I gave you guys everything you wanted. I'm sure Jelly Belly Mike will resurface again in the future lol. Happy Thanksgiving! See ya awesome peeps tomorrow!

20. Chapter 20

Chapter 20:

Nancy hurried back to her car with her box of things, wanting so badly for the moment to be over, for the whole mess to be over. Steve came through the front door, hurrying down the steps after her. She didn't want to talk to him anymore. It hurt her already that she had actually broken his heart, which she didn't think she had the ability to do anymore. But she had, and now she was forced to deal with the aftermath.

"Nancy, please, wait," Steve pleaded. "Can't we just talk about this? Just tell me what I have to do to fix this, and I'll do it. What do you want from me, Nancy?" He asked her, his voice loud but full of pain as well. She opened the back door to the car and shoved her things inside.

Johnathan had been sitting in the passenger's seat, but Steve didn't seem to notice. He insisted on going along just in case there was a fight between the two. Either she'd need a witness just in case there was a dispute over the belongings, or she'd need someone to help her out of a bad situation. Either way, he wasn't going to let Steve push her around anymore, like he'd gotten so used to doing over the years.

He got out of the car, and Steve stopped where he was, taking a step back. His pleading eyes suddenly flared up with rage at the sight of Johnathan. Nancy stepped in front of Steve, putting her hands on his chest to keep him standing where he was, away from Johnathan. If she failed to separate them, at least the car stood between them.

"Steve, I'm going. Okay? I'm not happy, and I need to figure things out on my own. You don't need me."

"I do. Stop letting the freaky family put lies into your head, Nancy," he frowned down at her. "They can't do what I can do for you, so why the hell would you want to go live with them, instead of here, in our own house, with me. We're supposed to be getting married, Nancy!"

"I don't want to!" She snapped at him. "How many times do I have to

say it before you believe me?! Before you take it seriously?! You always tell me I'm just nervous, and once it's over I'll see that nothing has changed. But that's not true and you know it. I'm not ready to get married to you, Steve, and I don't know if I'll ever be." She slammed the back door of the car, then climbed into the driver's seat. Steve smacked his hand against the window to get her attention, and that upset Johnathan.

"Knock it off, man. Just let her go," Johnathan said firmly, but kept his voice level and even.

"Mind your own damn business, Beyers," Steve said through his teeth. He bent down to look through the window at Nancy, his expression softening a little. "Just think about this realistically, Nancy. Don't do this on pure impulse, think it through. You know I love you, and you're welcome home as long as you don't start fucking Beyers, you hear me." He stood back up to glare at Johnathan. "You keep your hands off my fiance, freak."

"I'll leave it up to her," he shot back, getting in the car. Steve stood there, fuming, watching with anger boiling inside of him as Nancy drove off with Johnathan and all of her important belongings packed up in the car. He was sure that she would see that she was overreacting, that she was only being rebellious because she was still a little immature deep down. Nancy wasn't ready to settle down, because she wasn't ready to really be an adult, he was sure of it. That had to be it. There was no way she'd actually choose Johnathan Beyers over him.

Eleven's eyes fluttered as they struggled to adjust to the darkness. It wasn't the usual kind, the kind she occasionally woke up to in the middle of the night while she was laying next to Mike, who she could hear breathing softly beside her. No, she couldn't hear him. He wasn't there. She wasn't in his room at all, and the darkness surrounding her was the kind that terrified her the most. She let out a soft whimper that seemed to echo.

Then, in front of her, there was a slight change in the light, like something had come into view. She pushed herself up to her feet, then walked forwards, closer to that little bit of light. Why did this

keep happening to her? Why did she keep getting sucked in when she slept? She didn't hear Will calling out this time, so that light wasn't coming from him, not this time. When she stepped closer, she saw what it was, or rather who.

"Papa?" She said quietly, her feet halting, not wanting to get any closer. He looked horrible. He was thin, disheveled, barely clinging to life from what she could see. She'd never seen him look like that before, and it twisted her up inside. "Papa," she reached out, slowly, feeling a tug on her heart string at seeing him so broken and sickly. He turned towards her then, like he saw her, and his eyes were purple underneath, his cheeks sunken in, his hair grayer than before. Suddenly, he lashed out, his bony hands wrapping around her throat.

"Get me out of here!" He shouted at her, his voice hoarse and gravelly. "You got me in this mess, now you can get me out!"

"Papa!" she cried out, trying to pry his hands away. He held on tight, squeezing her throat, choking her.

Mike had been sleeping beside her, but he woke as soon as he heard her screaming. He jolted upright, quickly reaching over to grab her shoulders and shake her. He was frantic, completely panicked and afraid for Eleven. She was crying and screaming and coughing, and he had no idea what the hell he was supposed to do.

"Eleven! Wake up! Please!" He yelled, shaking her frantically. After a moment or two, her eyes fluttered open and she got quiet, though tears were still streaming down her cheeks. She sniffed, then sat up, throwing her arms around Mike's neck. She held onto him tightly, and her whole body started to shake with quiet sobs. He held her head against his shoulder, while rubbing her back with his other hand. "El, what is it?" He asked her worriedly. "What happened?"

"Papa," she said his name so softly that Mike hardly heard it even though she was right by his ear. His eyebrows furrowed. Any time that Brenner was involved, Eleven always had a hard time dealing with it. He was a soft spot for her, even though he'd done awful things to her. Mike didn't even know everything that her "Papa" put her through, and part of him didn't want to. If he knew, he might

have the sudden urge to kill a man, and that wasn't like him.

"What about him?"

"He's not here, he's not..." She sniffed, trying to stifle the tears for a moment so she could speak clearer and explain to Mike what she had seen. "He's trapped. In the Upside Down." She sat back so she could look at Mike in the eyes. "He's dying. He hates me." She looked down for a moment, then suddenly crawled out of the bed. Mike hurried along behind her, more worried now than before.

"What do you mean?" He questioned her further. "What's going on, El?" She walked to the bathroom and flicked on the light. Mike's eyes immediately fell on the red mark around her throat, the indents of fingers clearly visible. He stared for a moment, his lips slightly parted in anger and shock, not quite knowing what to think, much less what to say. Eleven stared at the marks.

"The monster took him there. It left him. He's trapped." She shook her head, not wanting to think about that sunken face, his pale skin, not any of it. She wished she could wipe the image of him away entirely. More tears started to fall. "It's my fault. All my fault."

"No, El, stop it. He got what he deserved."

"He wants help. He said I had to."

"You don't!" Mike said a little louder than he meant to. He regretted his volume as soon as he saw her flinch. Mike took her by the shoulder, spinning her around, away from the mirror, so he could look down into her eyes. "Don't you dare go try to help him. He used you, tortured you, locked you up. El, you don't owe that man anything. He's not your Papa." He learned from Joyce and Hopper after everything that Eleven had a different mother and father, that Brenner took her as a baby and raised her to be a weapon. Eleven didn't know that. "He's not. Your real family is gone, El. He was just using you."

"My real family?" She questioned, her eyes looking even sadder than before. "I had family?"

"You have a family now, El, and that's what matters." He pulled her to his chest, and he wished suddenly that he hadn't said anything at all. But her focus seemed to be on something else. What he told her, as important as it was, didn't really register, not at the moment. She was distracted by the horrifying image of Papa that was stuck in her mind, haunting her like a ghost lingering just behind her eyes. "Come on," he said, taking her by the hand and pulling her towards the bed. "Come lay with me. I'll keep you safe, El."

"Okay." She followed him to the bed, crawling under the sheets with him and curling up against his side with her head on his chest, her favorite way to sleep with him. She sank into him, wanting to hide from the memory of it, as well as the dull ache that she felt around her throat, even now, after all of it. Papa could reach her if she wasn't careful. She couldn't reach out to him anymore. No matter what.

Eleven dozed off after a little while, but Mike stayed awake, watching over her, afraid to sleep just in case something were to go wrong again. He wanted to be awake to get her up if she went back to that dark place. He knew it wasn't always her choice, but someone had to be there to help her just in case. If it meant that he had to go without a little sleep, he was okay with it.

Eleven woke the next morning, and when she sat up, she noticed that Mike wasn't in the bed anymore. A little moment of panic hit her before she realized she could hear the shower running. She rubbed the sleep from her eyes, then stretched her arms over her head. Slowly and groggily, Eleven slid out from under the sheets, her bare feet padding against the floor as she made her way into the bathroom.

"Mike?" She called his name tiredly.

"Hm?" She heard from the other side of the curtain. Eleven reached down to grab the hem of Mike's tee shirt, pulling it up and over her head, letting it fall to the floor. She pushed down her underwear and stepped out of them, pulling back the shower curtain so she could step inside. Mike turned, a little surprised to see her right there behind him now. He pushed his wet hair back from his face, then ran

his hands down his eyes to wipe away the water. "Are you okay?"

"Did you sleep?" She asked, ignoring his question. Mike blinked at her for a moment, then turned back towards the water.

"No. Not really. I didn't want to, just in case," he admitted, then stepped aside so some of the hot water could hit Eleven. She stepped forwards into it, then turned towards Mike, not even slightly bothered by their close proximity and their lack of clothing. "It's okay," he told her, already knowing exactly what she wanted to say and how she was feeling about sleepless night.

"You should sleep."

"I'm fine, El. I had a lot of sleepless nights while you were gone. It's not going to hurt anything." He reached up to brush a thumb over her cheek, then leaned forwards to kiss her softly. "I'll be alright. I'm more worried about you."

"I'm better," she lied, hoping it was convincing enough to fool Mike. It wasn't unfortunately, but he didn't say anything else about it. It was always better with Eleven to distract her, or to get her mind off of something completely.

"What do you want to do today?" He asked her. "You can pick anything."

"Yesterday," she said, her cheeks flushing lightly. She dropped her gaze to the ground, a little nervous to really admit what she had wanted since it happened. "I want to do more of that. With Mike." He was surprised that she was referring to the rough kissing and touching from the other day. He had felt a little guilty about all of that; he definitely didn't expect her to want more. He smiled.

"I think that can be arranged," he chuckled, pulling her against his bare chest. "But first how about we eat. Okay?"

"Okay," she nodded with a grin. Mike decided then, that what Eleven wanted was just the kind of distraction she needed, and he was more than willing to give her what she needed.

So I left off in a painful place again for you guys, I'm sorry! The chapter got long, so I decided to split it up :) Next chapter will be kinda smutty with the Mileven bits, so prepare yourselves! Hope you enjoyed this one anyways! I'll update the next one tomorrow if I can! I should be able to :) I'll def try for you guys. See you then, lovelies! Leave me a review to let me know what you want to see, and what you think :D So I'll have my muse for the next chapter. Til then!

21. Chapter 21

Hey guys! I'm back! As promised, even though it's a little late lol It's eleven here, and I'm finally getting this done, so forgive me **DX BUT YOU GUYS KNOW WHAT TIME IT IS. SMUT WARNING.** Like... the entire chapter is just smut. So if you don't want smutty Mileven, then skip to next chapter where the action will pick up :) I hope this chapter is everything you guys wanted and more ;D Enjoy and leave me a little review to let me know what you think. You guys are the fuel to my muse!

Chapter 21:

Eleven laid back onto the mattress, her hair spreading out on the pillow underneath her. She had made it very clear to Mike, as clear as she could, about what she wanted. It was hard not to, when he teased her so often, starting and stopping when he felt it was appropriate. Now, she just wanted him, all of him, the way that he wanted to give himself to her. She may not know everything there is to know about sex, but she was ready to learn.

Mike lowered himself down onto her, hands sliding up her waist, under her shirt, moving slowly over the soft skin of her sides and abdomen. Eleven focused for a moment, and Mike was a little surprised to hear his button on his jeans pop loose when Eleven's arms were wrapped around his neck. He looked down to see his jeans open now, and he witnessed the zipper sliding down. When he looked up, a little spot of blood was forming under her nose, but she seemed unphased.

"Eleven, I really wish you wouldn't," he told her with a playful roll of his eyes. "You could just take them off yourself." She grinned up at him, not really saying anything. She didn't have words anymore, and she didn't want to talk. She just wanted him, in the way that she almost had him a couple nights ago. The way he treated her then, like she wasn't this fragile thing, it was thrilling. She didn't want to always be fragile.

"It's okay," she told him. "Like before," she asked, hoping he would

understand. Of course, Mike had been around her long enough to know what she was saying, and to understand what she meant even with her limited vocabulary. He smirked down at her, then reached up to grab her wrists. He jerked them upwards, drawing a gasp from her lips as he pinned them above her head, down into the pillows beneath her.

"Like this?" He asked her in a low, seductive tone. Eleven nodded quickly, her eyes fluttering closed as his lips lowered to her throat. He just brushed them over the soft skin of her neck for a moment, teasing her with his hot breaths on her skin. Then, he pressed his lips to her, starting at her neck, then trailing the kisses down to her shoulder, then to her collarbone, his movements growing more feverish as he moved down. He stopped at the place her dress was covering.

He let go of her wrists, reaching down to take her by the shoulders and flip her onto her stomach. She went to push up, but he quickly pushed her arms down into the bed again, not letting her move. She whined in protest, but he ignored her as he bent down to slowly unzip her dress with his teeth. Once the zipper was all the way down, he let go of her arms to slide the spaghetti straps off of her shoulders. He let his mouth explore the exposed skin for a moment, kissing and nipping at her shoulder and neck before sitting back to pull the top of the dress down. Eleven reached to shove it the rest of the way off, but he grabbed her hands to stop her.

"Leave it on." It had always been a little bit of a fantasy of his to have to reach under a skirt, which he gladly did to remove the underwear she had on. They slid down her legs with ease, and he tossed them to the floor. Eleven didn't protest, she didn't say anything to stop him from what he was doing. It was exactly what she wanted, what she had been wanting ever since he started it the one night, after the truth or dare game. Jealousy was what seemed to get him a little rougher, but now, he was doing the exact same thing with a handsome, devilish grin, without the drive of jealousy, with only the strong desire he had for Eleven, and for pleasing her.

He rolled her back over, though she was eager to, so it didn't require as much physical effort. He looked down at her now, her chest bared to him and her dress rolled down to her hips. She was picture

perfect, the sexiest thing he'd ever seen, in real life or in a magazine. Nothing compared to her, nothing. He knew that these moments were to be cherished, so he stayed still for a moment, taking her in, letting his brain imprint the image into his memory. He didn't stop until she started to blush and turn her face away.

"You're beautiful," he told her, using his fingertips to bring her face back to his. "You're so beautiful, El." She wrapped her arms around his neck again, pulling him down into a kiss, hard, passionate, desperate for his attention and his touch. Mike tore his lips away from hers after a moment, moving down to tease her breasts with his tongue and his teeth, providing an adequate amount of pleasure mixed with a tiny bit of pain, which was what he figured she had been wanting. She winced and yelped when he teeth bit a little too hard, but those sounds were quickly followed by ones much more pleasing to Mike's ears. She was loving it, every moment of it, which he had hardly expected the first time, since she was so shy and reserved. Now, she just wanted to feel everything to the highest intensity.

"Mike," she whined, tugging at his jeans where the button had been broken. Mike grinned up at her, having more in mind than just rolling around in the sheets this time. He was going to go all out for her, and in the process, go through a few of the fantasies he'd always had that he never got to explore. He moved away from her entirely now, until he was standing up at the end of the bed. Eleven pushed herself upright, then crawled after him, sitting on her knees and pouting at him. She thought he was quitting on her again.

"Take them off, El," he told her, and she understood. She started to focus on the denim fabric around his waist, but he took her face in his hands and lifted it to his again, catching her gaze and cutting off her focus. "No, El. No powers. Do it yourself. For me." He used his shirt to wipe away the blood that started to drip under her nose, and she nodded back to him in understanding. Eleven grabbed the waistband of his jeans and tugged him down, then she grabbed the band of his boxers, and she peeled that away, too. Mike took the time to take off his shirt himself, since he had gotten her blood on it anyways.

He stepped out of his jeans, then reached down and grabbed her,

hoisting her off the bed. He thought back to when he was too small, too skinny to even lift her. Now, he was taller, more muscular, and he could lift her with relative ease. He turned once she was in his arms, pushing her back against the wall. She dropped down onto her toes, staring up at him as he pushed her into the wallpaper even harder.

"This is what you wanted, isn't it?"

"Yes," she answered quickly, desperately, wanting so badly to just keep going. He was talking too much, but she knew at the same time he was holding out on her on purpose. He was teasing her, driving her crazy. "Mike, please. Now." He kissed her quickly, then bent down to grab her by the legs, hoisting her back up off the ground, wrapping her legs around his waist. She held onto him by his neck, her whole body trembling with impatient desire, just ready to be with him like she had been before. He pushed the bottom of the dress up a little to give him better access.

The initial pressure of him was a bit painful. It was only her second time, and Mike knew that, so he moved slow at first to let her body adjust to him. She bit down on her lip, her eyes squeezing shut, and her grip on him tightening. She whimpered a little, but she wasn't in the least bit scared off. Once it started to ease, she opened her eyes again to look at Mike, to encourage him to keep going. He got a grip on her again, holding her tighter, in the right way, and he bounced her once. She let out a gasp, then a small moan, quick and low.

"More?" He asked, struggling to hold back his own sounds. He wanted it to be all about her, her feelings, her sounds, her desires. That's all he was going to focus on. Eleven nodded repeatedly, then tightened her grip on him. Mike was thankful that he was stronger, and that he could hold her easily. He bounced her again, and again, and again, slow at first, then faster, pushing her back into the wall harder as he started to move faster. It was actually hurting her back how hard she was being pushed into the solid surface behind her, but it was buried beneath how good Mike felt inside of her.

Mike groaned, trying to do it quietly, but it was difficult. She felt phenomenal. Getting to be with her like this, with no reserves, no being careful, Mike could hardly contain himself. It was a struggle to

stay quiet, and he knew that she was going to drive him crazy like this.

He pulled her away from the wall, which she was a little grateful for. He dropped her on the bed, coming down on top of her immediately, never once removing himself from her. Mike slid his hands under her thighs, lifting them and her hips a little so he could push deeper, which make Eleven cry out. He almost stopped and let her go, but when he looked up at her face, she was biting down on her lip, and behind the slight pain, he could see a small grin. She was getting exactly what she wanted, and she didn't want him to stop, so he didn't.

"Eleven, I want to try something with you," he breathed, trying to talk without letting out any of the sounds of pleasure. His hips stopped their movement for a moment, so he could get a response from her. "You trust me, right?"

"Yes," she told him, wishing he hadn't stopped. "Try it," she nodded her approval. Mike took a deep breath, not entirely sure how eleven would react to what he wanted to do. If she wanted it rough, which she acted like she did, then hopefully it wouldn't be a problem. He flipped her over again, then pulled her hips up so that she was on her hands and knees. He pushed back into her, and she gasped again, like she did every time he did that to her. Mike reached forward, hesitating a little, but he ultimately decided to go through with it.

"Come here," he said gruffly, burying his hand in her hair and grabbing a handful of it. He pulled her up, so that she was sitting upright on her knees, that same as he was. She winced a little at the pain of his hand holding onto a mass of her brown waves, but she forgot all about it when his hips started moving again, pushing him up into her over and over. The pain seemed to mix well with the amazing feeling of Mike. She wasn't at all concerned with it anymore, and her arms reached back to bury her fingers in his hair, resting the bottom of her palm on the back of his neck. "There you go," Mike purred in her ear. "That's a good girl."

Eleven could have stayed like that forever if it wasn't for that feeling bubbling up in her gut. Mike felt her body start to tense, and he knew that she was getting close. He couldn't let her, though, not yet. No, he

wasn't far off himself, and he wanted to wait, until he was ready. He let go of her hair, and he stopped for a moment. He rolled her onto her back again. He wanted to see her face, that beautiful, sexy face. He got back into position, between her thighs, and he started his hips again. Eleven let out another moan, this one louder than before. She just wanted to reach that end now. It was building up inside of her, and she just wanted that feeling of ultimate pleasure, the one Mike had given her before.

"Please, don't stop," she breathed out, and hearing those words turned Mike on more than she would ever know. He lifted her hips again so he could bury himself deep each time, which only sent him closer to the edge himself. As her body tensed, he inched closer to the edge, and when she suddenly convulsed, squeezing him, Mike quickly jerked back.

The waves of pleasure rolled through Eleven as they had before, but for some reason, it was so much more intense this time. Her whole body tensed, her hands grasping the sheets beneath her tightly in her fists as she tried to steady her body. She was trembling as the orgasm rippled through her, making her pant and whimper through the entire thing.

Mike hovered over her, his own body shaking with the climax that she brought him to. He'd never experienced that before, not during sex. It was totally new to him, and so so amazing. He was glad he jerked back in time, but when it was over, and his body started to relax, he realized he had dirtied Eleven's dress.

"Sorry, El," he sighed, but she just giggled at him, which made him smile. Her grin was infectious, always had been. She pushed off her dress and kicked it to the floor. Her arms reached out for him, and he rolled onto the bed beside her. This time, instead of laying on his chest like she usually liked to do, she brought Mike's head to hers. He laid his head in the center of her still bare chest, listening to her heartbeat, admiring how warm her skin was against his. "Was it good, El?" He asked, that rough and sensual part of Mike disappearing for the time with his orgasm.

"Great," she told him honestly, hugging him tightly. "Thank you."

"You don't have to thank me," he laughed. "It was amazing for me, too." He sat up and kissed her, much softer this time. There was a little bit of blood on her bottom lip, and with a quick look, he noticed she had bit down too hard and caused it to bleed. He kissed her again. "I'm sorry if I hurt you at all, El."

"Don't be sorry. I love you," she smiled at him. He nodded, then laid his head on her shoulder, snaking his arms around her waist to pull her closer to his body.

"I love you, too, El."

Sorry if it was too smutty XD I figured this is probably what you guys were waiting for, but if it was too much, my apologies. Hope it was good enough! Thanks for reading, and I'll update ASAP as always :D

22. Chapter 22

Chapter 22:

Eleven sat with her hands in her lap, eyes moving back and forth from each boy as they spoke. Mike was happiest when they were all together, the whole gang, including her. She could tell because he never stopped smiling, and his laughter was full and whole-hearted.

She didn't mind. They were her friends, and she enjoyed their company just as much as Mike did. Now, with Dustin and Lucas home for awhile, they could be together like old times. Mike felt complete, and she could understand why.

"So, I told her that I didn't mind dating an art major, but I wouldn't go with her to any of those stupid gallery things. To each their own, ya know," Dustin finished up his story with a shrug. "She was cute, but she wasn't worth the boredom. I can't stand quiet and simple things like that. She eventually dumped me because of it."

"I'm sorry, man," Lucas spoke first. "I don't think any of us like boring. Not after all the crazy shit we went through as kids."

"Still go through," Will corrected, and they all chuckled a little. Eleven smiled, knowing that she was the center of all their excitement. Her and Will, though Will's condition was nothing to be excited about. However, thankfully, he seemed to be doing better for some reason.

"Thanks for dinner, guys," Dustin said, throwing a few fries into his mouth. "I feel so stupid for forgetting my wallet back at Will's place."

"It's your favorite diner. No way we're not getting you something to eat," Mike told him with a friendly snort. "I make pretty good money working with Hop. He gave me a raise so I can buy El all the eggos she wants. He's got a soft spot for her."

"Uh. Who doesn't?" Lucas scoffed. "She's everyone's favorite X-man."

"I second that," Will said, shooting her a soft smile. "She helped save

me. More than once. So I owe her a whole lot. Without her, I'd be dead."

"We are friends," she said to everyone. "Friends would do anything for each other."

"Such a sweetheart," Dustin gave a teasing grin. "Crazy how someone so soft could be a government created weapon." They all nodded in agreement. It was true that they all thought it was strange for Eleven to be so powerful and capable of so much destruction when she was so kind and gentle as a person.

Eleven didn't see herself the same way. She looked at things in very simple terms. Friends were protected and cherished. Enemies were destroyed by any means necessary to protect friends. And Mike, because Mike was more than a friend. She smiled, thinking about their night together just forty-eight hours before. She looked over at Mike.

"Hey, Mike?"

"Yeah?" He responded, taking a sip from his soda.

"Can we have sex again tonight?" She asked, as though it was a common and normal question to ask in front of everyone. Mike choked on his drink, a cough bursting from his throat. He patted his chest, then looked over at her, face red and hot with embarrassment.

"El, please," he coughed. The boys all burst out laughing, loud enough to draw the attention of people in the booths nearby. Lucas laughed so hard he fell over on Dustin's shoulder, and Will laughed himself into a coughing fit.

Mike groaned and dropped his forehead into his palm, burying his fingers in his hair. He shook his head, face still flush, unable to even think of anything to say to do any sort of damage control. When he looked over at Eleven, she was so calm and confused, watching the other boys laughing with a puzzled expression.

"Did I say something wrong?" She asked. The laughing started to die down, turning into hands going up to wipe away the water that

pooled in their eyes from all the laughter. Dustin cleared his throat, "No, no, El, that was great," he told her with a much quieter chuckle.

"People don't talk about that stuff around other people, El," Mike said from under his hand, still not wanting to look up to see the expressions on the other boys' faces. He just wanted to bury himself in a hole for a little while.

"Why not?" She asked. "It was fun."

"El!" Mike shouted, sitting up to look at her with a "please be quiet" expression, not that she understood. "Let's just not talk about it right now, okay?"

"So Mikey boy is actually good in the sack?" Lucas said as if it was a question. Mike shot him a dirty look.

"Did you assume I wasn't?"

"He's very good," Eleven said with a polite smile. They busted out into laughter again, but Will blushed for Mike this time, too. Mike dropped his head down onto the table, unable to bear the embarrassment any longer. He just couldn't take it. He let out a long sigh, then another groan.

"Aw, don't be shy, Mike," Dustin teased him playfully. "Who else is El going to talk to about bedroom activities?"

"No one, I hope," Mike muttered from the table. Mike suddenly felt Eleven hand on his thigh. He gasped a little when her hand travelled further, rubbing against him through his jeans. It was pretty forward and bold on Eleven's part. It was completely unexpected. He looked over at her but said nothing. She just smiled, not wanting to embarrass him anymore.

"Let's change the subject before Mike explodes," Will suggested, feeling awkward for his friend. "Lucas, don't you have a girlfriend now?"

"Yeah, she's pretty great," Lucas grinned. "Perfect ten. I don't know how she ended up with me, but I sure as hell ain't going to complain."

Mike tried to listen and to focus, but Eleven's hand was moving faster, rougher, and he could feel himself growing in his jeans. He bit into his bottom lip to hide the pants of pleasure that threatened to burst from him. Eleven kept perfect posture, her face remaining ever curious and interested as she listened to Lucas tell his story about how he met his girlfriend.

Mike grabbed onto the edge of his seat with both hands, keeping his eyes on Lucas, though his focus was on Eleven's hand moving under the table, rubbing him over and over again. The pressure was driving him crazy. He wanted more, so much more, and all she was doing was teasing him. But he figured she knew that. She wanted to be intimate again, and this was the perfect way to get him in the mood, too.

His grip tightened as she glanced down, and without touching it, made his zipper slid down. She slid her fingers in the slot she created by unzipping his jeans but leaving the button done. She curled her fingers around his already hard member, and he almost yelped, his body jerking a little. The boys were too busy in their conversation to notice his slight movement.

"Oh God," Mike let the words escape his mouth in a breathless whisper, and Dustin looked over at him. He raised an eyebrow.

"You okay, man? We didn't mean to embarrass you that bad."

"I'm fine. Just feeling a little queazy. I'll be fine," he lied smoothly, and Dustin accepted him, but gave him a concerned look.

"Do you need to go home?" Dustin asked.

"No, I'm going to run to the bathroom." Mike shot Eleven a glare, then got out of the booth, heading towards the back. Eleven watched him go with a smirk, noticing how he was tugging down his shirt to hide where she had made him get so big. A spark of confidence made her grin even more.

"Should I make sure he's okay?" Eleven asked innocently, blinking at the boys. They exchanged glances, then Lucas shrugged.

"If you think you should. You can't go in the boys bathroom, though, you know that right?"

"I know," she nodded.

"Whatever," Dustin rolled his eyes. "El, can do whatever she wants. She's a fucking superhero, isn't that right, El?"

"Uh, I don't know," she said honestly, with a small chuckle.

"She totally is," Dustin shrugged. "I'm convinced."

"She's saved my ass."

"All of our asses," Lucas corrected.

"I'll be right back," El said suddenly, sliding out of the booth and heading back towards the bathroom. The boys continued their conversation while she was gone, not looking too deep into anything because El was usually so straightforward and open about everything. She made her way back to the bathroom, then knocked on the door softly. "Mike?"

"You're cruel," he said through the door.

"Can I come in?"

"Sure. We can't be in here long," he told her, unlocking the door to let her in. She closed it behind her. It was a small bathroom, built for only one person. "Why torture me here? In front of everyone. You know I can't do anything about it."

"I'm sorry," she frowned. "I just want..." She trailed off, her cheeks blushing. She had been so confident before, but Mike was wearing an expression now that didn't seem amused at all. Perhaps she went too far. They were around other people, and Mike made it clear that intimacy was private, for the two of them only, no one else.

"Fuck," Mike said under his breath, rushing at her, shoving her back against the wall and pushing his lips against hers roughly. She gasped in surprise, but quickly welcomed the kiss, throwing her arms around his neck. Mike snaked his arms around her waist, lifting her with ease

and walking her towards the sink. He lifted her a little higher, setting her down on the marble sink. She shivered a little at the coldness of it against her thighs, but it was nothing compared to the heated kiss that she and Mike were sharing at the moment. "If you want it so bad..." he murmured against her lips, reaching down to drag her underwear down her legs without breaking the kiss even for a second.

He moved his hips between her thighs, quickly popping his button loose, not having to mess with the zipper, thanks to Eleven. He pushed his boxers down just enough to free himself. Quickly and effortlessly, he dragged Eleven to the edge of the sink and pushed his way inside of her. She moaned softly, not wanting to be loud or draw attention. Her arms tightened around his neck, her chin falling on his shoulder. His hips started moving, pushing in and out of her, and she struggled not to do much more than pant with the pleasure that was coursing through her.

Teasing him had worked. She had gotten what she wanted in the oddest of places, but she didn't care. All she cared about was being with Mike, feeling him the way she wanted to feel him so desperately all night. Eleven couldn't get enough of that feeling, of the sensations that Mike caused in her body. She loved every minute of it, despite the cold on her thighs and the need to be quiet. Having to hide was a little thrilling, if she was being honest with herself. She hoped that she wouldn't embarrass Mike anymore, but it was clear by the fast-paced movements of his hips that he didn't care too much anymore.

"I hope Mike's alright," Will said after a minute of silence between the boys. His question was answered almost immediately as Mike and Eleven returned to the table together. Mike had his hand flat against his stomach, and his hair was a little disheveled. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, just got a little bit sick. Maybe it was something I ate, or maybe I ate too fast," he lied skillfully, his face selling the story really well. Eleven was smiling, her cheeks slightly flushed from the experience.

"Sorry, man," Lucas frowned.

"Maybe we should call it a night," Dustin suggested, stretching his arms over his head. "It's getting pretty late, anyways. Better get Will home, ya know. He's not feeling too hot either."

Mike nodded. "Alright, guys, well I'm sorry I ruined the fun." He pulled his keys from his pocket, and the boys all waved off his comment. They didn't care, they were just worried that he was sick. They wanted him to get to feeling better. "I'll see you guys later," he told them, waving as he left. Eleven copied him, saying goodbye politely before following Mike out of the diner.

Once they were outside, she let herself grin, and she looked up at him.

"Hey, Mike."

"Yeah?" He looked down at her with a similar grin.

"You left my underwear on the floor."

"Did I?"

"Yeah."

"Damn," he chuckled. "Oops." He threw an arm around her shoulder, and they walked together to the car, both satisfied and content with everything for the time being.

ALRIGHT YOU GUYS THERE YOU HAVE IT. I hope you all enjoyed the chapter and I gave some of you guys what you wanted to see :) I can't do smut every chapter, so it'll probably be a chapter or two before it gets super smutty again! But I hope it was good anyways, and I hope everyone is satisfied :D Leave a review and let me know what you think, please! Love ya guys, and I'll see ya tomorrow hopefully ;D

23. Chapter 23

Sorry guys! I know it's been two days :(I hoped to get it posted last night but I got this head splitting migraine that took five hours and three different medicines to break. I'm sorry for making you wait :(I'll make it up to you with a double update today. Ill do a chapter this morning, then later tonight.

Chapter 23:

Nancy stared down at the phone, her eyebrows furrowed with worry and frustration. She had three missed calls from her mother, and Nancy really didnt want to call her back. She felt guilty. It was probably driving Johnathan crazy to hear the landline ring over and over again in just a matter of an hour, but he said nothing. He just watched Nancy carefully, trying to understand what she was feeling and thinking.

Finally, Nancy swallowed her nerves and picked up the phone, dialing her old home phone and waiting with her arm crossed over her chest. There was a flutter in her chest when her mom answered the phone, and the tone in her voice made Nancy only want to avoid the conversation more.

"Steve told me I'd find you here," her mother sighed. The disapproval in her voice was obvious. "Nancy, what're you doing? You have an opportunity at a nice, cozy life with Steve, and he loves you. You're not a teenager anymore, Nancy, there's no reason to try and rebel against me anymore."

"Mom, it's not about rebelling."

"Then what is it? Are you having an affair? What are you doing with Johnathan Beyers? You know there's something wrong with them, ever since Will disappeared. None of them have been the same ever since. And what kind of life can a newspaper photographer give you?" She lectures profusely. Nancy took a deep breath.

"Mom, please. I'm an adult now, and I can make my own decisions."

It's not a rebellion. This is what I want to do."

"But why?" Her mom demanded to know. "What in the world would possess you to give up everything for a man like Johnathan Beyers? Steve gave you everything you could ever want. He cares about you, which is more than I got after I was married. You'd be a fool not to marry Steve, Nancy. Don't call off this wedding. End your silly fling with the Beyers boy and go home where you belong, with your fiance."

"Excuse me." Johnathan lifted the phone gently from Nancy's hand. She gave him a frantic look, but he put a hand on her shoulder to reassure her. He brought the phone up to his ear. "Hello? Mrs. Wheeler?"

"Who is this?"

"Johnathan Beyers. The town freak, as most people seem to believe these days." The other end of the line was silent, but she didn't hang up, so he began talking. "Nancy is not happy with Steve. The life you want for her isn't the life she wants for herself. I may not have the money or cushy job that Steve has, but I am going to make sure she always has a choice. To let her do what makes her happy, regardless of what I want. Don't worry about her. We'll take care of her, and she won't go without. If you love her like I'm sure you do, you will let her decide what she wants above all else. Nancy is smart. She'll make the right decision. Thank you, and have a good day."

Johnathan put the phone back, then took Nancy by the hand and pulled her into a hug. She rested her forehead against his firm chest, breathing out a sigh of relief. He rubbed her lower back gently.

"That was brave of you," she told him, her voice a little less shaky than before. He shook his head,

"Not brave. Just honest. I don't like everyone trying to make decisions for you. It's wrong. You're grown up now, and they still think you don't know what's best for you." He cleared his throat. "I hope you don't listen to them unless it's what you want to do, Nance."

"I know what I want, Johnathan. Don't worry. I want to be here for

now, and then I want to be somewhere else. But... wherever I am, I want you to be there, too." She stepped back so she could look up at him, show him the sincerity in her eyes. "I want you, Johnathan Beyers."

"I'm not going anywhere, Nancy Wheeler. I want you, too. I always have, and I probably always will." His cheeks flushed. Talking to Nancy had never been easy for him, but the more he saw how fragile and broken she'd become, the more he wanted to help her get back to who she once was, someone who was strong, brave, and never took shit from anyone ever. She stood up for herself, and if she wasn't going to at the moment, Johnathan would do it for her.

"Thank you," she smiled. "For everything."

"It's not a big deal, Nancy. You're doing the all the hard work. Uprooting your life to start a new one. Hopefully with me."

"Definitely with you." She rested her palms flat against his chest, then stood on her toes to place a soft kiss on his lips. He stiffened a little, surprised by the sudden gesture, though he'd wanted to kiss her for awhile now. "You don't have to be shy or careful anymore," she told him.

"Then, I won't." He wrapped his arms around her waist and brought her against him, holding her tightly and kissing her a little harder, a little more desperate. He'd waited so long for a chance like this, a chance to be in Nancy's life, not as a friend, but as someone she loved and cared for deeply, as more than a friend. He finally had his chance, and he was going to take it, no matter what tried to get in his way.

Eleven stood and stretched her arms over her head, her bare feet a little cold against the floor. She noticed that Mike was gone, almost as soon as her brain started to function normally. He didn't usually get up before her, and she started to get a little nervous. Eleven made her way towards the bedroom door, then out into the living room, calling for him.

"Mike? Mike?" She walked into the kitchen, and Dustin and Lucas

were sitting there, playing with a deck of card. When she came into the room, they shifted to look at her. She blinked at them. "Where's Mike?"

"He had to work, El, don't worry. He didnt want to force you to stay in Hop's office all day, so he asked us to come hang out with you until he got off."

"He insisted that you not stay alone because of what happened before. We didn't have an issue with it. You can sit and play blackjack with us. I'll teach you how," Lucas told her, using his foot to push out the chair on the side of the table closest to her. Eleven laid a hand on her stomach and frowned when it grumbled.

"Hungry?" Dustin chuckled. "Why don't you get dressed and we'll take you out and buy you breakfast."

"Eggos."

"We'll get you eggos," Lucas promised. "But you got to get dressed. You cant just leave in Mike's tee shirt." She nodded, then headed back to the bedroom. Eleven quickly got dressed in a pair of shorts and a pretty white blouse, then headed back to the kitchen.

The boys were up now. Lucas had thrown on his jacket and grabbed his keys, and Dustin had grabbed the box of eggos from the freezer. He nodded at her, then lead the way out of the door.

Lucas drove them down to the diner they always ate at, that almost everyone in Hawkins ate at. Dustin didn't mind because it was his favorite place to eat ever, and he was eager to buy himself the breakfast special. When they got inside, however, Lucas and Dustin saw some old friends of theirs from school.

Lucas walked Eleven to a booth and asked her to sit down and stay. He walked back to where Dustin had stopped to say hi to their friends, and Lucas lingered there, too. Eleven sat still and patient, watching them for a moment before someone stepped into her field of vision.

"Funny running into you here," a velvety voice said. She looked up to

see the boy from before, at the mall. Jess, if she remembered correctly. He had gotten into a fight with Mike, and she remembered how upset Mike was after. Her body tensed a little. "I didn't know you lived in Hawkins."

"Do you?" She asked a little nervously, glancing around him as Dustin and Lucas who were laughing and didn't seem to notice. She hoped he didn't and he was there for some other reason.

"No, my brother does," Jesse told her. "Him and his wife settled down here a couple years back. I live close so I stop by." She looked down at her lap. "So," he said, slipping into the booth opposite of her and leaning back against the seat. She wanted him to go away so badly, without causing a scene. Mike wanted to hide her after all from the people working for Brenner. "You here alone or is your boy toy here?"

"Boyfriend," she said softly.

"What?"

"Mike is my boyfriend. He said so," she said a little louder and firmer than before. She lifted her eyes to his, holding his gaze. Jesse just grinned across the table at her.

"Alright, beautiful, I know you're probably the loyal type. But just in case." He reached over and grabbed her hand. Eleven went to jerk back, but he held on. "Whoa, whoa, easy. I'll be quick." He pulled a marker from the inside of his jacket, pulled the cap off, then jotted down a series of numbers on the inside of her palm. "Eleven." He brushed his thumb over her tattoo, the one with her number. "Interesting."

"No. It's not."

"Well," he said with a smirk, letting go of her hand. "If you get bored or need a friend when your boy toy isn't around, you give me a call, okay?" He shot her a wink, then got up, passing by Dustin and Lucas as he was leaving. They exchanged glances, then glared at the other boy as he walked out of the diner.

"El, who was that?" Lucas asked.

"Jesse," she told them. "From the mall."

"Is he a friend?"

"I don't know," she said, her eyebrows furrowing in confusion. "I don't know him well."

"Just be careful, alright, El," Dustin told her, sliding into the booth. She just nodded, holding her hand in her lap, pressing her thumb over the little black numbers on the inside of her wrist. She didnt like them. She never had.

Mike groaned quietly and laid his head down on his desk. It had been a rather quiet day in Hawkins. The only significant call they had in to the station was Mrs. Maggie down on Pine who was concerned about some kids playing in the woods behind her house so she called it in, which she did about once a week.

He was just about to die of boredom when Hopper came in. He was going to wish he was sitting there bored again once Hopper talked to him.

"Mike, I need you to come with me."

"What? Why?" He asked a little anxiously. Hopper looked around, not wanting to make a big deal out of it in front of everyone. He lowered his voice.

"Don't ask why, just come with me. I don't want to do this, son, but you're under arrest." He took a deep breath, then reached back for the handcuffs in his belt. "Please don't make me use these." Mike stared at him in awe, wondering what the hell was going on. He stood anyways, and followed Hopper to the back.

"What's going on, Hop?"

"Kid from the next town over is pressing charges for assault. Over a scrap at the mall apparently. I didn't want their cops taking you in. I said I'd do it myself, but I'm going this out, Wheeler, I promise. It reeks of bullshit." Hop led him back to the holding cells, then stepped aside. "Get in."

"Hop, this is ridiculous," Mike said, but he followed his orders and stepped into the cell. Hopper closed the cell door, then clicked the lock into place. He took a deep breath again, then shook his head.

"I know, kid. I'm sorry."

"I want my phone call."

"I'll get it to you," Hopper told him. He stepped closer and spoke quieter. "Don't use it to call Eleven. She can't help you. Call someone who can because you only get one call, Wheeler. Please don't waste it." With that, Hopper left Mike alone in the cell, in the quiet, and Mike laid his forehead against the bars and gritted his teeth and curse the boy that had hit on El before.

24. Chapter 24

Okay so we're all moved in and good now :) Able to relax for the most part lol. Sorry for the wait, you guys. I'll be back on schedule from now on with every day or every other day depending :) End of the semester is here so college will be brutal but I'll make time! Here's the chapter I know you were all waiting on! Hope you enjoy :D Please leave a review and let me know what you think!

Chapter 24:

Mike sat with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. He didn't know what to do or say or think anymore. Part of him knew that he really couldn't deny much of anything. He did have a fight with that guy in the mall, he did put his hands on him, and he did, more than likely, hurt him. Then, Mike ran off with Eleven and left the boy there. All of it was true, and he knew that it was going to be hard to convince anyone that Mike wasn't guilty of assault.

Eleven needed him. She was strong, and she was powerful, but she was also naive and confused about so many things. She needed Mike to make sure she was okay, that she was staying out of trouble and avoiding things that she shouldn't mess with. Things like the guy that was suing Mike now. He took a deep breath. He had used his one and only call to talk to Dustin. Mike told him to look after Eleven, and to tell Nancy what was going on. If anyone was going to be willing to help him, it was Nancy. She would either do it herself or convince their parents to do it.

Still. Being locked up behind bars and unable to get out there and look after Eleven was pure torture. Knowing she was probably scared, wondering where he was and why he wasn't coming home, it tore at his heart. He was anxious, more than that, he was afraid. He could do months at a minimum on the inside if he got convicted of assault, and then Eleven would be without him far longer.

Mike heard the door clang outside of the cell, and he jolted up from his seat, moving to the bars to look out. Dustin was coming down the

hallway, followed by Eleven. When she sat Mike at the bars, she practically sprinted towards him, taking the metal poles between her hands. She narrowed her gaze at them, tuning in her focus on the rusted metal.

"No, no, no, El, you can't," he told her quickly, reaching through the bars to turn her face to him. "You can't bend the metal or break me out of here. It's illegal, okay? And I could be in even more trouble. So please don't." He felt his heart break inside his chest when a tear slid down her cheek. "El, please. It's going to be okay. Someone is going to get me out of here, and we're going to be fine."

"I'm sorry," she told him, sniffing once the words came out of her mouth. "Mike, I'm sorry."

"Sorry? For what?" He scoffed at her, brushing the tear on her cheek away with his thumb. "You didn't do anything, El, it was my fault. I lost my temper because I care about you so much. I shouldn't have. It's not your fault."

"Let me," she told him, turning her attention back to the bars. He turned her face towards his again, holding it there a little firmer this time.

"No, Eleven," he told her sternly. "It's bad. It's a bad thing to do, and it could get you and me both in trouble. You have to stay with Dusting for a little while. He has a key to my place. He'll be there with you, and Lucas and Will if they want. You don't need to worry. You won't be alone."

"I want *you*," she whined, pulling at the bars with her hands. "I *need* you." Mike took a deep breath, dropping his forehead against the bars and closing his eyes. There wasn't anything he could do, and he knew it. Hopper was his friend and would help in any way he could, but Hop was a sheriff before anything else. If Mike was legally supposed to stay there, then he would. Even if he was the dispatcher for the police station for a few years. The law was the law, and Hopper knew when to follow it and when not to better than anyone.

"I'll be home soon, El." He reached down to take her hand in his, bringing it up to his lips and holding it there. "It'll be okay. Just wait

a little longer for everything to get sorted out. Okay?"

"Promise?" She asked.

"Promise what?"

"You'll be home soon," she clarified. "Promise me." She stared him down, and when he lifted his head, he could tell that she knew he wasn't sure if it was true or not. He was telling her what he thought she needed to hear, not what he actually thought. Mike took a deep breath.

"I promise everything will be okay."

"Hey, Hop's waving us out," Dustin said, stepping forward to put a hand on Eleven's shoulder. "We aren't supposed to be back here. Come on, El, we have to go for now. We'll come back." She shook her head, clinging to him desperately. Mike forced himself to pull away, even though she held on tightly, and she whined as he pried his hand and arm away from her.

"Go, El. You have to."

"I got her," Dustin said, grabbing her by the wrist and dragging her towards the door. Eleven reached back, trying to grab onto the bar to hold on, but just missing it.

"No!" She cried. "Mike! Mike, no!" She struggled with Dustin, but since she didn't want to hurt him with her gift, she relied purely on physical strength and failed. After a moment, she stopped struggling and let Dustin pull her out of the holding room. Hopper walked them both to the front door, saying goodbye as he watched them leave. Even he could see how broken up Eleven was.

Eleven stared down at the faded number on her hand angrily. Jesse had written them there in case she needed him, and she did. She needed him to take back everything he said about Mike so that he could be free again. She needed him to suffer a little afterwards for the pain and the suffering he caused Mike. She had been locked up for years before, and trapped again years afterwards. It was a sorry

existence, and one she didn't want for Mike.

Dustin had dozed off watching a scary movie on the television, so Eleven snuck over to the landline. She pulled it down to the floor, sitting cross legged as she stared down at the numbers. It was probably a bad thing to do, to force someone to do something. It might get her in trouble, but there weren't many places that could hold her against her will and she knew it. She took a deep breath. Mike was more important than anything, so she pressed the numbers in the order he wrote them.

"Hello?" His voice came from the other end after only a couple of rings. She hesitated for a moment, wondering if it was really the right thing to do. Eleven wasn't a liar, she wasn't a deceiver, but she could be both when she had to.

"Jesse?"

"This sounds like that pretty little thing that lives in Hawkins," he chuckled and she wanted to hit him right then and there. Eleven bit back her anger, knowing that the job she had to do was more important than her personal feelings. She had to save Mike. "Eleven, I'm guessing."

"Yes," she nodded as though he could see the gesture.

"And what can I do for you, beautiful?" He asked her with a heavy sigh. She paused, thinking about it for a moment. Even though she was naive, she knew it wasn't smart to bring him to Mike's house. She didn't want him knowing where they lived, or around Dustin when Eleven started working on the issue.

"Meet me?" She asked. "Diner."

"Anyone ever tell you that you have a way with words?" He teased her. Eleven blushed a little, but not with embarrassment or shyness, but with shame and anger. She had a limited vocabulary and she didn't always know the words for everything, but she was smart. She could think hard and deep, and that's why she knew she was capable of forcing Jesse to free Mike.

"Meet now." It wasn't a question, or a request. It was a command.

"If that's what you want. I'll see you there."

"See you," she repeated, standing to hang the phone up quietly. She looked over at Dustin, who was toppled over now on the arm of the couch. She headed for the door, sliding on her shoes and grabbing the sweater that Nancy had given to her. She ran her fingers through her slightly tangled mass of waves, then headed out of the house, down the steps, and down the street.

Jesse was already in a booth by the time that Eleven finally got there. The walk was long and made her legs and feet hurt, but she knew that it had to be done. She couldn't drive, and she couldn't tell anyone what she was going to do. There was no other choice but to walk.

When she came in, Jesse spotted her and waved her over. Eleven swallowed her hatred for him and faked a smile, heading over to where he was sitting and taking her place across from him. She kept her hands in her lap, wringing together anxiously. He grinned over at her, leaning forwards on the table, closing a little bit of the gap between them. Though she wanted to lean away, she stayed still.

"I didn't think you'd call, if I'm going to be honest," he smirked at her. "But I guess you're here because I had your boyfriend arrested." He leaned back against the seat behind him, his look of triumph never fading. "You're here to convince me to drop the charges, aren't you? To let your boyfriend just walk away so you two can be together again. Is that it?"

"No," she said, and it was the truth. She didn't care about convincing him, she was going to force him. Whatever consequences it brought, Eleven was going to hurt Jesse until he gave in and agreed to set Mike free.

"Then what are you here for?" He asked, his eyebrow raising in surprise.

"You," she told him in response, and it also wasn't a lie, not

completely. She was there to see him, to get him alone, and to break as many bones in his body as it took to get Mike back, to bring him home. Jesse chuckled at her response,

"Maybe I was wrong. Maybe you aren't the loyal type. You're the kind that stays out of convenience, but when it's not easy anymore, you bail. You think I'm going to be easy, beautiful?" The grin on his face made her stomach churn.

"Come with me," she told him, standing up suddenly. He didn't hesitate.

"You lonely, doll? Your boy toy not giving you the things you want and need? Things that... everybody needs." He stepped closer to her, looking down and leaving only inches between their faces. "Lead the way. I think I can give you what you really want, Eleven." She sucked in a deep breath, then turned on her heels and headed towards the door. He followed behind her, his grin only growing.

25. Chapter 25

Here's the double update I promised before I knew about the moving out thing lol XD but shits starting to hit the fan. There will be Mileven fluff, too, but before then, angst and drama :) Then we'll get back to focusing on them as a couple. I just like a little action here and there. Enjoy guys! Please leave a review and let me know what you think :)

Chapter 25:

Eleven took deep and careful breaths as she walked back towards the woods. She was grateful for her shoes, because she ran so long in the woods without them before she returned from the Upside Down. Her eyes stayed focused downward on her feet, on the pace of them and the sound of the leaves crunching under her feet. Behind her, she could heard the sound of Jesse's footsteps, which only increased her anxiety.

"So," he cleared his throat. "Tell me again why we're taking a stroll through the woods." Eleven looked over her shoulder at him, and he seemed utterly unphased by all of it, by her, by the woods, and by the silence that had lasted between them up until that moment.

"Alone," she said back, though she wasn't a fan of that word. It never meant anything good, and in this circumstance, it definitely different. A hand grabbed her wrists and jerked her back. Her body went rigid as soon as she hit Jesse's chest. She looked up at him, into his twinkling blue eyes, and she knew she was in over her head. She wasn't cruel, and it wasn't like her to torture anyone. Eleven hated to hurt people unless she had to. She quickly reminded herself that she did, that she had to do it for Mike's sake. To save him.

"I think this is far enough for that," he said quietly, keeping his arms around her and backing her against a tree. He could feel her body tensed and still, and he clicked his tongue at her. "No need to be so nervous. No one will see us out here." He spun her around, and Eleven put her hands flat against the tree to push back, but he pinned her there with his chest. She took deep, ragged breaths. "Now, now,

Eleven. Before you do what you really came here to do."

"Wha-" Eleven was cut off by the sound of that painful squealing, that high frequency that pierced her ears and pounded against her skull. She cried out, then slid to the ground against the tree. Jesse backed off, looking around. He rolled up his sleeves quickly, hands trembling. She was screaming now, hands covering her ears in an attempt to ease the pain a little. His own skull felt like it was going to burst, so he moved swiftly to pull his ear plugs from his pocket and shove them in each ear. Once the frequency was dulled, he pulled a rag from his jacket pocket, followed by a little glass bottle.

Eleven twisted around, looking up at him with wide and fearful eyes as he stalked closer to her. She pushed herself off of the ground, and when he went to reach for her, she ducked away. Her only option was to spring far enough that the noise emitting from his pocket wasn't able to affect her anymore. However, he was quick on her heels, tackling her to the ground.

"Help!" She yelled as loud as she could. "Mike! Mike!" Jesse reached around and put the rag over her mouth and nose, holding it there as tightly as he could. Eleven noticed the smell immediately, it was something she had smelled before in the lab, some kind of chemical, something bad. She tried to struggle with him, her body squirming under his. Physically, he was strong, and that high pitched noise kept her mind from focusing hard enough to throw him.

"I don't want to do this, gorgeous, but I got family to take care of, and I need to the money." He tightened his grip on her, using his body to pin her to the forest floor. Tears were streaming down her cheeks now, and her struggling slowed. The more she breathed in through the cloth, the dizzier she became, the more tired. She wanted to sleep, to lay down, to be in Mike's arms, in his bed again. "That's it, take it easy."

"Mike," she said one last time, slipping out of consciousness. He couldn't hear her, and she knew he was locked up, but that was her first instinct, to call to him, to try and get to him someone. It wasn't going to work this time. No one was coming to save her. That became more than clear once she drifted out into the darkness of sleep.

Jesse scooped an arm under her knees and under her shoulders, hoisting her off the ground. He left everything he had on the ground, and after a little bit of struggling, flung the little metal cylinder from his pocket and stomped on it, cause it to break and he signal to die down. He stared down at the sleeping girl, admiring her beauty for a second. She really was unlike any girl he'd seen before, but she wasn't more important than his sister. He made a deal. The girl for enough money to pay for his sister's surgery, her transplant. That's all that mattered to him.

Eleven finally stirred hours later, but when she tried to reach up to rub her tired eyes, she discovered that her wrists were tied down. She blinked away the sleep, her eyes falling down to where metal bands were holding her wrists to the arms of a chair made from the same shiny metal. Eleven tugged at them again, but they wouldn't budge. Her eyes focused, hard, and the left one popped loose, the metal bending and warping under the strain of her telepathy. She turned to the other and popped it loose as well, then stood up and looked around.

She was in an empty white room, with nothing but a small bed and two pieces of paper hanging on the wall, drawings that she had made when she was a little kid. They had taken her back to the lab, back to where Papa had held her captive her entire life. She walked to the wall, then laid her hand over the crayon artwork hanging there. Her heart sank to her stomach, and more tears fell from her eyes.

"No," she shook her head. "No, no, no, please, no." She rushed to the door, banging on it frantically. "Out!" She screamed, hitting the door with her fists. "Get me out!" There was a sudden low hum, a squeal, then the sound of someone clearing their throat. She turned around, away from the door, her red stained knuckles trembling now. In the far back corner, there was a speaker high on the wall.

"Eleven, if you cooperate with us, then no harm will come to your friend."

"Mike," she frowned. Without any more detail, she knew they were talking about Mike. The whole thing with Mike being arrested was a way to separate the two, to get Eleven alone. They used Jesse to lure

her out, knowing she'd go to talk to him for once reason or another. It was all a setup, a trap. She had been so desperate to save Mike that she fell right into it. "If you do not cooperate, our men have orders to kill the Wheeler boy." It was a voice she didn't know, but it sent shivers down her spine nonetheless. It was her abductor, her captor, and possibly her killer.

"Yes," she said back loudly, hoping someone heard her. Apparently they did, because the metal door swung open and two men in lab coats came in and ordered her to follow. While her instinct told her to kill them and run, the threat against Mike kept her powers locked inside for the moment. She didn't have a choice. Eleven would have never chosen her own life over Mike's. She followed them.

They led her down the stairs, all the way to the very bottom floor, the secret floor that they kept hidden from everyone. She knew what was there, what was still there, because she caused it. Eleven was shaking with fear, figuring it out each step of the way. They took her there for a reason, and Eleven was smart enough to figure it out without anyone telling her.

The lights flickered all the way down the hallway. They led her into the larger room, the place that she had dreaded for so long. Eleven stood there in front of the gateway, the thick, gooey hole in the wall that the monster first crawled out of. She was surprised it was still open after the first one died, but she supposed it was the only thing tethering the Upside Down to the real world, the world they lived in.

One of the men handed her a flashlight, and the other gave her a bottle of water.

"Go in there and find Brenner. Give him this and lead him back," he said once he put the bottle in her hand. Eleven stared at it for a moment, and she wanted so badly to throw it back at them and run. "If you don't come back, your friend dies." Different voice, same grim tone as the one over the speaker. She looked up at the doctor for a moment, then nodded. She understood. She was too far away to immediately protect Mike, so she would do it. Eleven would go back to that awful place and pull out the man that kept her prisoner for years because she loved Mike too much to let him die.

She stepped up to the gateway, the door to the Upside Down. She looked into it, seeing the dim light coming from the other side, even though it was always cold and dark there. The wall seemed to pulse with life and get a little excited as she got closer to it. Eleven always had a strange connection to that place, and to the things that dwelled inside of it. They chose her to go in after him because the monsters were afraid of her, because she could kill them with her mind. They still looked at her like a weapon, a tool to be used, instead of a young girl with feelings and emotions. She was a thing to them.

"Go now," a doctor ordered, pushing her forward by the shoulder before stepping back quickly. Eleven looked at them over her shoulder, at their cold and uncaring expressions. She was trembling with fear, and they weren't bothered by it in the slightest. She let out a small whimper, then pushed her way through the gateway, through the wall, and to the other side.

The cold hit her instantly, chilling her entire body. Eleven wanted to turn around, to run, to get as far as from that place as she possible could. However, they had the advantage. They played it smart and they got Mike away from her. They protected each other, and without one another, they were vulnerable, ripe for the taking. Eleven knew that she had a higher chance of survival than anyone else in the Upside Down because she survived it for seven years. That's why they wanted her. They wanted her to bring back the man she hated the most, the man that ran the whole lab.

She sucked up her fear, her nerves, and her anger. Those emotions weren't going to help her get out of there with Papa so she could save Mike's life. As far as she knew, she only had one choice, to walk through the Upside Down and to find Papa, and to fight her way back to Mike, at any cost. When she got back to Mike, there would be hell to pay. Everyone who hurt them, to forced them apart would suffer immensely and die slowly. She would show no mercy, not a single bit. Even Papa, who she believed to be her only parent in this world, wouldn't be safe from her revenge.

26. Chapter 26

Chapter 26:

Will stirred when he felt the cold against his skin. It was familiar and threatening all at once, and his eyes shot open with fear. He jolted to life, sitting upright instantly when he realized where he was, and what was happening. His breath danced in front of his eyes with his exhale, little bursts of smoke from his already weary lungs.

He threw his covers off of his legs, standing up. The floor was like ice on his feet now, even colder than his wooden floor at home got during the most brutal of winters. He shivered violently as he took a slow, painful step forwards.

"El?!" He called out desperately, wanting to leave as quickly as he could, get back to his bed where he was safe and warm, where he was in control. "Eleven, are you there?" She usually heard him. When he called, even in her sleep, she knew to rescue him. It was part of her, of what she could do.

"Will?" Her voice came back from a distance. He smiled a little, but wondered immediately why she was far away. She'd always just appeared there, from what she called the darkness. Eleven was in a different place, away from the Upside Down. So why now, suddenly, did she sound so far from him.

"El!" He called out, and he walked out of his room, down the hall, ignoring the searing pain of the icy floor at his bare feet. He headed for the front door and threw it open, stepping out onto the grim and gray front porch. "Eleven, I'm here!"

"Will," her voice came, much closer this time. She started as a small dot in his vision, but she was running, full speed, heading right for him. "Will, you have to go!" She shouted as she trotted up the steps to him. "You have to go now."

"El, are you here? Like... really here?" He asked, his eyebrows furrowing. "What the hell are you doing here? How?"

"Save Mike," she said, lowering her voice. "Papa... his men... Will, you have to save Mike. Please," she begged. "Hurry. Ask for help. Get him out. Keep him safe. Hide."

"Hide? From what?"

"Papa's men!" She said a little louder, a little more desperately. "Go, now. I'll come back." She grabbed his shoulders with both hands and the familiar shock of life sent him back to his bed, to his real bed, on the side of the world he would rather be in. Will knew there was no time to waste. He slid to the ground, then rushed to the living room, to the phone, and dialed Hopper's number.

He hoped for Eleven's sake that Hopper knew what the hell she was talking about, and that he'd do what needed to be done. Mike obviously needed out of that cell. He was in danger, and Eleven made that clear. Will didn't know a lot about Papa or Eleven's past for that matter. He heard bits and pieces, but never all of it.

Eleven was relieved. Will was a gamble, but she had chosen to take it, for Mike's sake. She needed to buy a little time, but then, she was sure that Mike would be safe. She had been attacked for the last time, Mike had been attacked for the last time. Eleven wasn't going to let this end peacefully, not anymore, and she had an idea of where Papa was hiding.

She walked quietly, though she knew the monster or monsters would keep away from her, given what she had the capacity to do. She could kill them, and she had done it before. They would avoid her if they could, but not Papa. No, he would be hiding, somewhere he could easily be found, but somewhere away from the lab where they liked to dwell.

She stepped down into the pipe that ran out of the lab. It was empty, mostly, other than a shallow pool of icy water at the very bottom. Her feet soaked through as she made her way down the pipe, towards the back where she knew he would be hiding. Eleven had tried to escape once when she was young, and that's where she hid for two days until they finally found her. It was a good spot, and it got light from above to keep it lit.

She wasn't at all surprised to see a bony, slumped over figure against the left wall of the pipe. It moved slightly when she got closer, and Papa lifted his yanked face so his cold, dead eyes could lock onto hers. He scowled.

"Get me out of here, you little bitch." He slowly pushed himself upright on his bony limbs, his entire form nothing but skin and bone, lanky and shrunken. Eleven took a step back, her stomach churning as she compared this ghost like person to the Papa she knew before. "GET ME OUT OF HERE NOW!" He snapped, his jaws popping together like a rabid dog's.

"No," she finally said back, turning her focus on him and not on his ghastly appearance. He took a staggering step closer to her.

"You get me back right now, Eleven. Or I'll kill you."

"I'm not afraid of you," she scoffed at him. "No more." She narrowed her gaze, and Papa fell to his knees under the weight of her stare, struggling to stay upright as she forced him down. "You can stay. Or you can die."

"You aren't a killer, and you know it," he hissed. "I'm your father. You must listen to me, Eleven. You have to listen to me, damn it." He was seething, speaking through gritted and rotting teeth. She shook her head, her fear starting to slip away, replaced by determination, by strength.

"Die, then." The first bone snapped, his femur, she thought, and she hesitated for a moment. He howled in agony, and in the distance, she heard a low roar. They would find him now, she was sure of it. "You can't hurt me. Goodbye, Papa." She flicked her gaze to his other leg, and another bone broke with a sickening snap. She took a few steps back, watching him writhe and cry out in agony, begging, pleading for her help, but she was beyond decency now.

"Don't leave me here! Don't let me die, Eleven, please!" He sobbed, broken and defeated on the bottom of that pipe, the one she hid in so long ago. She stepped back again.

"Goodbye." Eleven turned on her heels and ran, not wanting to be

there when the Demogorgon found Papa, or for what would happen when it did. He was a dead man, finished by his own rage and Eleven's inability to forgive him anymore. She couldn't, not after he went after Mike, after he had men go after Mike.

Eleven had to run now, to spend however long it took to find another crevice, another gateway to slip through. The lab was a one way ticket. Sneaking out was easier than sneaking in, and those monsters knew every time someone slipped through. They would swarm it, waiting for them to return in hopes of leaving. But no one ever left, not that way.

There would be another place. She would head back to Mikes, to check the tree she'd crawled out of before, when she finally came home, bringing all the death and destruction she always seemed to carry with her. Eleven knew she was dangerous, not to just her enemies, but also to the people she loved. It was just how it went, how it always went for her. Everyone she loved got hurt, everyone she cared about or got close to would suffer. But she was selfish with Mike. He was the one thing she would never give up again.

Mike paced his living room anxiously, occasionally glancing over at Hopper, who was watching outside of Mike's window. Two days. Dustin had told Hopper that Eleven had been gone for two days, which Will alerted them the truth of. She wasn't missing, she was in the other place, the one Hopper went into to save Will.

He knew what was in there, what kind of cold and dark hell that place was. The ninth circle, he called it, after he got back. The ninth circle of hell was a frozen wasteland, and he couldn't think of a better way to describe the Upside Down.

"Hop, what do we do?" Mike asked after a minute, pausing his pacing. Worry was etched into his face, and Hopper knew that it had to be tearing him up inside. "You could lose your job over this. Not to mention we have no way of getting to El. She's trapped there, Hop."

"I know, kid, just calm down. I ain't losin my job, and we aren't going to give up on that little girl. We'll bring her home, just... settle down for now. There isn't anything we can do until Dustin finds that Jesse

kid and brings him to us. Hes gotta know something." He looked away from the window, back at Mike. "It'll be okay, Wheeler, just relax." When he turned back, he saw a little white dress hobbling down the driveway. "Kid, she's back."

"What?" Mike rushed to the window, yanking back the curtain. The air left his lungs when he saw her, so dirty and disheveled, the way she looked when she first came back, after being gone for seven years. He rushed to the door, throwing it open and sprinting down the steps, down the driveway. He didn't say anything, he didn't have to. She was there, and he wasted no time getting to her.

He grabbed **her** like waiting any longer would lead to her vanishing again. Mike pulled her against his chest, hugging her so tightly he might have broken her if she wasn't so strong. Uncontrollable and unexpected tears slid down his cheeks as he clung to her. Eleven had held it together. She had managed for so long and as soon as she was in his arms again, she lost it.

A sob broke from within her, rocking her body. She started to shake violently against him, crying, the reality of what she had done finally setting in. She was a killer, a murderer, and she didn't regret it. What would Mike think of her?

"Sh," he hushed her quietly, running his hand over her messy hair. "Sh, El, don't cry. Please, don't cry. I love you. You're safe now, youre with me." He kissed the top of her head and held tighter in hopes that he could stop her shaking. "Please, El..."

But she couldn't stop. Each sob tore through her as violently as the the last. Her whole body trembled with the horror of her realization, of the person she was becoming. Even if she could justify and say it was for Mike, she left a man to die. She sentenced him to that death by breaking both of his legs. Maybe she really was a monster.

"Im sorry," she cried, clinging to his shirt. "Mike, I'm sorry." He didnt know what she meant, and he didnt want to ask, not then, not while she was still broken, still in pain over whatever it was. He honestly didnt care. She was home. He was free. They were together. Nothing else, not one other thing, mattered to him at that moment.

Sorry guys! End of semester, bleh :(here it is though! That sweet, sweet Mileven reunion :) hope you enjoyed and just remember, Jesse isnt gone yet ;) see ya next chapter, in the next day or so. As soon as I can guys, I promise, I'm trying. please leave a review DX dont leave me Just yet

27. Chapter 27

Chapter 27:

Eleven sat in the tub, holding her knees against her chest. Even though she was home, and she was more than relieved, it was hard for her to stop thinking about Papa, about the way he looked and sounded when she snapped his legs and left him to die. He begged and pleaded, something she never heard him do before, and it was still ringing in her ears.

The bathroom door creaked open, and Mike stepped into the room slowly. She lifted her head and turned towards him, hugging her knees a little tighter. She was happy to see him, happy to have some kind of distraction to keep her away from her regret for a moment.

"Feeling any better?" He asked her, walking over to sit on the edge of the tub. He ran a hand over the top of her head, down her wet hair, stopping at the top of her back where his reach ended. His touch was always soothing, and that gesture was no different.

"Yes," she said quietly, nodding her head a little. Mike could tell she was lying, but he didn't question her or challenge her answer. Now wasn't the time. The sadness behind her eyes was tearing him up inside, but pushing her was going to end badly, he just knew it.

"Eleven, I'm so glad you're home," he told her. "I would have lost it if you were really gone again. I love you so much more than I ever thought possible."

"I know," she sighed. "Is it okay now? With Jesse." She remembered what happened with him, too, and what he said about his sister. She needed help, and Jesse was going after Eleven to help her. While she was so mad at him about all of it, she understood what it was like to be willing to kill to protect a loved one. She learned that feeling because of Mike.

"He dropped the charges and ran," Mike told her with a sigh and a shrug of his shoulders. "Hop was right. Jesse was trying to keep me from you so he could corner you. That's all. No reason to go through

with it, you know?"

"Good." She dropped her gaze from him and stared down at the water, watching it ripple a little as she breathed. Mike bent down and grabbed her under the arms, picking her up from the tub entirely. He pulled her against his chest, hugging her tightly as she stood on her toes. He ran his fingertips down her spine gently, and she shivered a little and sank into him.

"It's okay now, El," he told her, even if he didn't know for sure. It was an uncertain statement that he made sound incredibly convincing. Eleven almost believed him. She shook her head against his chest, but said nothing. "Yes. It is. Brenner is gone, and the charges against me were dropped."

"But," she whined, "I'm not okay." Mike took a deep breath. She had told him everything about what happened while she was in that pipe, in the Upside Down. She told him that she had left him to die, and that she felt awful because of it. Eleven was so innocent, and she had such a big heart. Amidst her kindness and loving nature, she was also lethal. Eleven could kill easily; she had done it before to protect Mike and the others. He never once faulted her for that.

"When it comes to the people we love, we can't let anyone take them away. If they try... it's alright for us to fight back. I'd kill Brenner with my bare hands if I got a chance, and if it meant you would be safe from him." He wasn't afraid to admit he would kill for Eleven, and he hoped it would make her feel better. She clutched onto the fabric over his chest, wanting to be as close to him as physically possible. He lifted her again, pulling her from the tub. Mike reached back and grabbed a towel, wrapping it around her and tucking it around her shoulder.

"Thank you," she whispered softly. Mike took her by the hand, leading her out into the bedroom. He grabbed her a nightgown and handed it over to her, waiting patiently for her to get dressed. She did without hesitation, thanking him again, then grabbing onto his arm as he led her out into the living room.

"How about a movie?" He asked her, bending down to turn on the TV. "Maybe it'll take your mind off of everything." He flopped back

on the couch, and Eleven sat beside him. He put an arm around her and drew her closer. She toppled over, letting her head fall on his shoulder, and she relaxed a little, staring into the little television screen and watching the people move around on it. "El, I hope you know that you're not a monster. He was."

"We both are." Her voice was low and somber, and it broke his heart. He didn't know what to do, what to say, or how to make her feel better. It was the most helpless he had felt since he almost died in the Upside Down.

"No, El. You're not." He reached over to turn her face towards him, looking into her eyes sternly. "You're not a monster. You never were, and you never will be. You saved our lives, El. You are everything to me, and I couldn't love a monster. Means you can't be one."

"Mike," she sighed, pushing his hands away and laying down with her head on his upper thigh. "I'm sorry, Mike."

"Don't be. I know that... he was like a father to you for a long time, even if he wasn't a very good one. But, El, after everything that man did to you... I can't help but think that he deserved what he got. I firmly believe it. If you hadn't... done what you did... then he'd still be trying to separate us, just so he could capture you and take you back to that horrible place."

"I know," she breathed, trying to forget, trying to just relax like he wanted her to. "No more, Mike. Relax." He nodded, then ran a hand through her still wet hair.

"One more, and I'll be done," he told her. "I thought I was going to lose you, El. When Hop got me out, and he told me that you'd visited Will, and that you were... in the Upside Down. I thought it was going to be another seven years before I found you again. That was... the most afraid I've ever been. Please. If you can avoid it, don't go there. Don't visit that place, and don't disappear on me again."

"I won't," she said a little louder.

"Promise?"

"Promise."

Dustin barely got his hands on him, but with a last bit of effort, he caught Jesse by the back of his shirt. He yanked the boy back, spinning him so that he could look him in the eye. Dustin honestly didn't think Jesse would ever show his face around Hawkins again, but there he was, at Dustin's favorite diner, where he had lured Eleven into a trap just a few days ago.

"Where do you think you're going?" Dusting demanded to know, his grip on Jesse's collar tightening. "I've got something to say, and you're going to listen."

"Please, I didn't have a choice," Jesse said, his eyebrows furrowing. "She's my sister. You have to understand."

"I don't care what your reasons are," Dustin scoffed. "I said listen, didn't I? Not run your goddamn mouth." He threw Jesse to the ground, a little harder than intended. He wasn't doing it to hurt Jesse, not at all. No, he just wanted to scare the hell out of him. "Listen closely, kid, because I ain't going to tell you twice. You stay the hell out of Hawkins, far, far away from El. If I ever hear that you were around her, that you cornered her, or that you even called her on the phone, I will end you. Your sister is going to be one brother short. Do you understand?"

"I'm leaving tomorrow," Jesse told him. "I was just here to deliver the girl."

"She has a name!" Dustin snapped, "And you're going to forget it. Do you hear me? You'll leave, and you'll never look back. We should kill you for what you did to her, but we're not like you." He kicked his side with the toe of his shoe, not hard, but just hard enough to get a little *oomph* from Jesse. "Get out of here tonight. Find way." Jesse glared up at him,

"Fine, I'm gone. I won't be back."

"You better not be. I said I wasn't going to tell you twice." Dustin stood with his arms crossed as Jesse pushed himself to his feet and

started the other way, away from the diner, towards a car that was parked at the very back of the lot. Once he was in and driving away, Dustin relaxed and headed back inside, hoping that the act was enough to keep Jesse from coming back.

Guys I'm sorry it's been so long and that this was short :(I needed to do an aftermath scene, but I want to skip a bit ahead. So I hope to update the next chapter later tonight sometime, but if not, then tomorrow morning. I've had project after project, test after test, and it's coming to an end, so things should get better soon. Bear with me! Love you guys, and please I need some ideas for stuff to happen next :) Non-smut ideas lol because I've already gotten plenty of those from you lovelies ;) See ya soon! I apologize again.

28. Chapter 28

Chapter 28:

Mike was certain that a change of scenery was just what Eleven needed to chase away her blues after everything that happened with Brenner. Dustin had suggested camping, but when Mike brought it up to El, she seemed to cringe away from the idea of being deep in the woods again. Even though he had been a little excited about the idea of camping, he wasn't going to force Eleven to do anything she didn't want to. He was trying to take care of her after all. Another time, when wounds had healed, he would take her camping with him.

Instead, Will came up with the idea to take her to this little river resort a few towns over. It was a little like camping. They rented out a small wood, two bedroom cottage for everyone to stay in. Mike and Eleven would share a room, while Lucas and Dustin shared the other and Will slept on the couch. He liked having the TV as background noise as he slept anyways. Even though it was small, it was perfect just for the weekend. Not too far away was the river that they could swim in, kayak, or fish if they wanted. Mike didn't think Eleven had ever been swimming before.

They got the key to the cabin and get to work settling in. Mike carried their duffel bag to the back room, dropping it down on the bed and sifting through it. There was a single bathroom, and he figured he would go ahead and set their bath supplies in there so they wouldn't forget later. Eleven came in behind him, lingering in the doorway for a moment before walking in and sitting on the edge of the bed.

"How long will we stay?" She asked him, looking around at the wood plank walls and the vintage light fixtures. It looked like someplace taken out of those old Western movies that she saw on TV back at Mike's sometimes. It made her smile a little. She loved those movies. Mike closed the duffel bag and moved it to the floor, kicking it with his foot to push it under the edge of the bed.

"Just the weekend, El. We'll be home by Sunday night," he answered after a moment, sitting down beside her and putting his arm around

her shoulders. "We're here to have fun, not to punish you or anything, El. You'll like it here, I promise. I used to come with Nancy and my grandparents during the summer sometimes. We always had a blast, especially when Will and the other guys came with us."

"Okay," she nodded, taking a deep breath. "Fun. I understand." She wasn't so sure that she was capable of fun at the moment, but for Mike's sake, she would try. After all, he seemed so excited to take her there, to show her the river he played in as a child. Who was she to take that away from him?

"Hey guys!" Dustin shouted excitedly, popping into the doorway for the moment. "Me and Lucas are gonna go ahead down to the water. You guys want to come?"

"What about Will?"

"He's going to take a nap on the couch for a bit, then come down," Dustin explained. "Come on. This is what we're here for, isn't it?" He left just as suddenly as he arrived, and Mike looked over at Eleven for an answer. She stared back blankly for a moment, then just shrugged her shoulders as a response. Mike reached down to fish out the duffel bag again, then grabbed the two piece bikini from the bag that Nancy helped Eleven pick out at the store.

"Put the bottoms on like underwear, and then I'll help you with the top, okay?" He told her. She nodded back to him, taking the small bits of cloth from his hand and heading out into the bathroom. A minute or two later, Eleven came back into the room topless, holding out the second piece for Mike. He blushed. "Don't walk around topless, El. What if the guys see you?" He frowned a little, taking it in his hands and untangling it for her.

"They didn't see."

"That's a relief," he sighed. He unclasped the top strings and put them around Eleven's neck. He pulled the bikini down, to cover her breasts, and just the slightest brush of his hands against them sent a craving through him. He finished quickly by tying it around her back. "All done," he cleared his throat, stepping away. "I guess I'll go get changed now." He snatched up his swim shorts and headed to the

bathroom.

Eleven waited for him, glancing over at a full length mirror up on the wall. The bikini didn't cover much, just what a bra and underwear did. She wasn't sure why underwear wasn't acceptable but a bikini was. She tugged the top down a little, wanting to cover her breasts so no one could see them. They were for Mike only, and she understood that. She was his, and he was hers. Exclusively. That was what it meant to be a boyfriend and a girlfriend, from Eleven's understanding of the words. Mike had taught her so many things, but that was probably the most important to her.

Eleven's eyes fell on Mike's torso when he came back into the room without a shirt. He was well-toned for a boy that didn't exercise very often, she figured. Physical exercise had been a big part of the training for the men that worked as security for Papa at the lab. She had seen them, very rarely, in the middle of their training. However, as fit as they had been, Eleven had never been attracted to a body like she was to Mike's.

She got up and walked to him, putting her arms around him and hugging him close, tight, and laying her head on his firm, bare chest. She loved the feeling of her exposed skin against his, but Mike was a little wary of so much contact. They had plans for the day, and he was already wanting to cancel them in favor of staying in bed with Eleven all day and night.

"Come on, the guys are waiting," he said after a minute, pulling away and grabbing her wrist to tug her a little towards the door. He headed out of the cabin, down the steps. The river was really close, only a few yards away from where all of the cabins were. Eleven lingered on the porch behind him, not sure whether or not she wanted to trot down those steps behind him. Mike looked back. "You okay, El?"

"The water," she swallowed. "What's in it?"

"Just some fish and stuff, El. Nothing is going to hurt you, I promise. I won't let it." He smiled up at her, then offered his hand. "Come on. Have fun with me. You won't regret it, El." She hesitated for another moment, but the smile on his face and the love in his eyes convinced

her that it was okay, that she could actually enjoy herself, even with everything that happened to her. She reached out and took his hand, walking down the steps.

He led her, barefoot, across the grass and down to the sand bank along the river. Dustin and Lucas were already down there, roughhousing in the water. They paused when Eleven and Mike walked down to the edge of the water. Mike admittedly got a little jealous and slightly flustered when he saw her attention focusing on El in her lacy bikini. They looked to him shortly after though.

"Glad you decided to join us," Lucas chuckled. "Come on in, the water's fine." Mike turned to Eleven, a big grin growing on his face. She didn't even have time to react before Mike scooped her up, spun her around, then fell into the water with her in his arms, pulling her down with him. Eleven held her breath and closed her eyes, letting the water submerge her, comfortable and confident in his arms.

He brought her up with him, setting her back on her feet and waiting until she took a deep breath. She shook the water from her eyes, then looked up at him. A grin spread on her lips that lit up his whole day.

"Fun?" He asked her with a small chuckle. She nodded,

"Fun." She threw her weight forwards and tackled him into the water again, holding close, hugging him under the slightly murky water of the river. She was having fun, surprisingly, and the horror of Papa and Jesse and everything else were gone for the moment, locked away in the deeper, darker part of her mind, hidden from the Eleven that was there, in that moment, with Mike and Dustin and Lucas and Will, just having fun like she should have been doing all her life.

Mike sat with Eleven on the front porch, staring out at the river not far from them. She had a towel wrapped around her shoulders, and her hair was still wet and falling loosely over her shoulders in kinky tangles and waves. Mike had his hands in his lap initially, but she was too cute to stay away from. He looked over at her, putting his hand on her knee.

"I'm glad you're enjoying yourself, El. Really, I am," he said quietly.

He could hear the chatter of the boys inside very faintly. He was surprised that there weren't many other cabins that were rented out. It was getting close to the summer, and the resort was mostly empty. Didn't matter too much. He finally had some alone time with Eleven, so they could talk.

"Me, too," she said back to him, just as softly. Even though they didn't have to whisper, it just seemed right to match the quiet of the night. The only sounds were the soft lapping of the water at the shore and the sound of crickets that annoyed Eleven a little. "Thank you for bringing me here."

"El, you know I'd do anything for you. I just wanted to see you happy. To see you smile."

"I am. I did," she beamed at him. "Mike, I love you."

"I love you, too, El." He couldn't keep his hands to himself anymore. He reached over, resting his fingertips along her jaw, turning her face to his so he could lean over, closing the gap between them. Mike pushed his lips to hers, kissing her softly at first, gently. When Eleven's hand reached for his shirt, taking a handful of it into her fist, he deepened it more. She pulled him closer, tugging at his shirt until he slid over towards her. She welcomed the kiss, welcomed the feeling of his lips moving over hers in that rhythm he typically used.

She sank into him, into his warmth, into his touch. He was everything she could ever dream of, absolute perfection. She was so in love, and she hardly really understood what it meant in terms of anything else but Mike. She just knew she loved him, without having to understand it. He was her world, her guardian, her lover, her everything. Life without him would be hollow and meaningless.

Mike slid his tongue over hers, and she moved her tongue against his in response, causing him to grin against her lips. His hand that rested on her knee slid up a little further, between her thighs, rubbing against the oh so sensitive spot. She whimpered and moaned against his mouth, then quickly pulled away and covered her mouth. She looked back at the house where she could hear Dustin and Lucas growing quieter.

"Tonight," she said, still clinging to his shirt. "When they sleep."

"Tonight, then," he purred in her ear, nibbling on it for a moment before pulling away and standing up. He offered his hand once again, and this time, she didn't hesitate to take it. "Shall we join them then?"

"Yes," she smiled, standing up with him. "We should."

Finally guys! I'm so sorry for that wait. Exam week, bleh, but it's over now :) I have more free time. I hope you enjoyed the chapter anyways! It's longer than the last one, so I'm happy about that lol. SMUT NEXT CHAPTER WHOO. Love you guys and pretty please, even though it's been so long DX leave me a little review so I know you're still enjoying it. Thanks guys and I'll see ya soon!

29. Chapter 29

Chapter 29:

Mike waited patiently for everything to wind down. He knew that it would be easier to satisfy his cravings once everyone had tired out and gone to bed. Dustin and Lucas stayed up much later than Will, as usual, drinking and talking about things they experienced at college. Everything from girls to parties to bad professors. Mike couldn't relate, so he felt a little left out of the conversation anyways. His mind was elsewhere, even if he could have related. He was stealing glances at Eleven, who sat across from him, listening to Dustin and Lucas intently.

He loved the way she looked when she was so interested, so focused. She was starting at whoever was speaking, absorbing every word she knew and didn't know. Her desire to learn and curiosity were unmatched. Finally, he couldn't take it anymore. He told the boys he was going to bed, then grabbed Eleven by the wrist and pulled her back into the bedroom.

They knew. He said they were going to sleep, but Dustin and Lucas exchanged knowing glances once they were gone. It was obvious that Mike had something else besides sleep on his mind. They just grinned at each other, clinked the bottom of their bottles, and continued drinking and chatting about their lives away from Hawkins. Meanwhile, Mike dragged Eleven all the way back to the bedroom and locked the door behind them.

Eleven's back hit the bed first, forcing out a little air from her lungs. Before she even had time to suck in another breath, Mike was on top of her, holding her wrists against the mattress and working her neck with his lips and teeth, nipping and sucking at the soft skin, leaving little marks all the way down to her collarbone. They'd still be there later, but Eleven didn't know that hickeys were supposed to be embarrassing, so they wouldn't bother her at all. In fact, she would probably adore them, she figured, since they were put there by Mike.

When Mike reached down for her bathing suit bottoms, Eleven's hand gripped tightly on his wrist, holding it in place. Mike's eyebrows

furrowed. He looked up at her with disappointment and concern etched into his features. She wasn't upset, though, as he realized, nor was she even slightly deterred from the intimacy that they both craved. No, that lust was still in her eyes, which only confused Mike even more. She pushed him over, onto his back, then slid down to the end of the bed, between Mike's knees.

"El, what are you doing?" He asked her, sitting up. He watched with intrigued eyes as she got to work untying his swim trunks, then pulling apart the button that held them together until she could drag them down a little. "El, what are you-" He gasped in a breath as her hand gripped him, pulling his member from his trunks so that it was open and free, accessible to her.

"Dustin said something," she told him, rubbing it for a minute. Mike raised an eyebrow.

"He said what?" The jealousy and worry was evident in his voice, so Eleven quickly put his fears to rest.

"Not about me. About a girl. I heard him... talk to Lucas. She used her mouth." Mike realized what she was saying. Eleven had overheard Dustin bragging to Lucas about some girl he had been with before, about receiving oral sex from her, more than likely. He kind of wished Eleven didn't have to hear that kind of guy talk, but she was curious by nature.

"El, you don't have to," he told her, reaching down to rest a hand on her cheek, to brush her hair away from her face, to tilt her chin up so he could look her in the eyes. "I'd rather make you feel good, El. Now and always."

"Does it?" She asked.

"Does it what?"

"Feel good? My mouth?"

"I'm sure it does, El, but..." He trailed off, his cheeks a deep red, spreading down to his neck. He looked away in hopes of hiding his blush, but she still saw. He was a little embarrassed for some reason.

Eleven wondered if he ever even felt it before, with the girl who came before her. "But you don't have to do it. Really. You won't get anything out of it."

"But you will," she said, dragging down his swim shorts until they fell away from his ankles completely. "I don't need anything." Mike smiled a little at how much better she had gotten at communicating what she wanted. She was very stubborn when she wanted to be, always sure of herself and what she believed in, what she wanted, and who she cared about. He always admired those things about her. They were what made him fall in love to begin with.

She gave him no more time to protest. Eleven lowered her lips down onto him, around him, taking only the tip into her mouth. She held it there for a moment, a little embarrassed that she wasn't really sure what else to do. Mike was panting now, struggling to hold back his desire for her touch, her kiss, her everything. He reached around to bury his hand in her hair. Eleven pulled away and looked up at him in shame.

"It's okay," he told her. "Just do what feels right. Use your lips and your tongue. Put pressure."

"Okay." She tried again, taking the tip of him between her lips and brushing her tongue over it as she held it there. Her eyes darted up to Mike as he let out a small gasp, and she figured that she was doing it right. She kept using her tongue, running it over the smooth skin of his member. She slowly started to move her lips, up and down, taking in more and more as she got comfortable with it.

Mike had never felt those sensations before. In fact, it was his first time experiencing oral sex. He'd given, but never received. Cathy didn't care much for giving back. Eleven's movements started to become more intentional, more confident, and they were driving him crazy. The heat and the pressure, the stroking of her tongue against him, it was all forcing something to build rather quickly in his gut.

"Wait, wait, wait," he said. His hand reached to push her shoulder away, but something unseen forced his hands down against the mattress at his side, holding them prisoner there. "El, stop it. Not like this. Not too fast. Let me go," he panted, fighting her mental hold on

his hands, and fighting the orgasm that was ready to tear through him, She was moving faster down, her lips squeezing him as she worked over every inch with her lips and tongue, down to her throat. She had figured it out, figured out what made him react the way she wanted him to, and she wasn't going to let him stop her from finishing the job.

"Fuck, El, please," he whined, his breathing quickening, becoming more ragged with each passing second. "I can't, I can't, you have to stop. El, El, I-I-" He bit down on his lip as his control slipped, and his climaxed slammed into him at full force. Caught off guard, El backed away from him, not in time to avoid it completely, however. Still, she just grinned up at him as he convulsed for a moment. Her hold on his hands broke, and he gripped the edge of the mattress with them until it was all over.

Mike immediately grabbed her wet towel from the floor and wiped at her plump lips and cheeks.

"I'm sorry," he told her, his cheeks red again. "I didn't mean to."

"I know," she smirked up at him. "It's okay." She rose from her knees and moved to sit on the bed beside him, resting her head on his shoulder. "Did I do good?" He looked over at her and nodded,

"It was amazing, El."

"I'm happy, Mike."

"Me, too," he said back, kissing the top of her head. "Next time," he added, "it's my turn."

"Your turn?"

"Yeah," he chuckled. "I can do the same for you. Next time, I'm going to make you feel good, El. As a thank you, for making me feel so good." She smiled, wondering what it was going to be like when the tables did turn. He'd be so determined, more than likely, to make it as amazing as possible. She looked forward to it. "That was the first time that's ever... That I ever... you know."

"Really?"

"Yeah. You're the only one who can make me feel like that, El," he promised her, looking down at her. She lifted her head so she could meet his gaze. He took her hand in his, brushing his thumb over her knuckles gently, over and over again, just wanting to show her some kind of affection, some kind of touch. "You're the best thing that's ever happened to me."

"You, too," she nodded back. "You saved me."

"You saved me, too," he snorted. "More times than I've ever saved you. I don't think I'll ever get to fully repay you for what you've done for me, but I'm going to try. I promise."

"It's okay."

"No, but I suppose it's not important right now," he smiled at her. Mike leaned down quickly and claimed her lips, kissing her heatedly before laying back. She followed him, falling down onto her side, looking straight at the side of his face.

"Will you stay?" She asked him randomly. "Forever."

"Will I stay with you forever, you mean?" He wondered, and she nodded to confirm her meaning. He nodded back. "Of course I will. I don't want to ever be with anyone but you, El. Not ever."

"But Cathy-"

"Forget about her. I have. I've forgotten about every other girl in this world but you. There's nothing to worry about, El, and I'll prove it to you." Mike touched his lips to her one more time before pulling her closer. "You're everything to me. I'd die before I let you go."

"Me, too," she agreed, curling up against him, happy to be in the warmth of his arms. "I love you, Mike."

"I love you, too, El. Forever."

"Promise?" She asked.

"I always promise. I always mean it. Yes. I swear it. Forever, El."

"Forever," she repeated with a grin, laying her head against his chest. She liked that word, and liked it especially because it was coming from Mike. He meant it; she could tell. Mike wanted only her, and she wanted only him. Forever and ever.

Hey guys! Here it is finally :) My busy weekend is over and I'm home again! Ready to write and rock and roll XD Hope I didn't keep you guys waiting for too long, and I hope you enjoyed the chapter! It's lots of fluff :) I have ideas for future drama and angst too heheheheheh. Leave a little review for me if you don't mind :D and I'll see you guys soon.

30. Chapter 30

Hey guys! sorry for the wait :) I've been having headaches this past two days and trying to work on something else at the same time lol Finally, I got it done, so I hope you enjoy :) Now that the smut and the fluff is done, time for more drama! with fluff and smut mixed in ;) Hope you like the chapter, and you guys know I always love your reviews! So if ya want to, I do appreciate them :) Enjoy!

Chapter 30:

Mike wasn't excited about going back to work, but he knew he needed to. The rent wasn't going to pay itself, and he couldn't let Eleven go out there on her own anymore, not after everything that happened. She couldn't get a job, so he had to keep doing his. He didn't mind though. It made him feel good to be able to take care of Eleven, and to get her the things she needed.

Mike paused and took a deep breath. He had been wanting to get something special for Eleven for some time now. Not just Eggos or a dress or things that she needed like that. No, something she could wear that would remind her of him every time she looked at it. Like a necklace or something. That was what boyfriends did for their girlfriends, and Eleven was very much his girlfriend. However, he had missed so many days of work that he didn't have much extra after bills and food expenses. He got up from his desk and headed back to Hopper's office. Jim Hopper was sitting back in his desk chair, his feet propped up on his desk, when Mike came in.

"Hey, Hop," Mike said, knocking as he came through the door to get the sheriff's attention. Hopper blinked, then looked up at Mike. "Hey, I was wondering if I could get some overtime. I know I missed a lot because of... well everything with El. I was thinking about getting her something nice as a gift. She hasn't really been the same since she left Brenner to die, and I want to give her something that might cheer her up."

"What were you thinkin' about, kid?" Hopper asked curiously, a sly

grin on his face. "You're too young to be buying any rings just yet, Wheeler. I know she's your girl, but things aren't exactly steady or normal around her. I'd be careful."

"Not a ring, Hop, not like that," Mike shook his head, walking further into the office and sitting down across from him, on the other side of the desk. "Like a bracelet or a necklace or earrings or something girls like that looks pretty. El really likes to look pretty." A slight blush crept into his cheeks as the memory of a young El staring into the mirror after she had lost the blond wig they put on her. She turned to him and asked if she was still pretty, and he had told her yes. Now, all these years later, when her head was full of wild chestnut curls, his opinion of her never changed.

"She's less likely to lose a necklace," the sheriff shrugged his shoulders. "Before you go spendin' your money on a fancy necklace, let me look in some of the boxes of my ex wife's things back at the house. I don't know how you feel about hand-me-downs, but they're just collecting dust where they're at now, and I know you don't have much cash to spare, Wheeler. Want me to look?"

"I don't think El cares if it's brand new," Mike smiled a little. "I appreciate it, Hop, I really do. Just make sure it's something nice. I'll give you a little bit for it if you want, but like you said, I don't have much to spare."

"Don't worry about paying, son, I'm offerin' so you can save some money. I don't want it anymore. I moved on."

"Guess things are working out with Will's mom, then?" Mike asked, one eyebrow raising slightly. Hopper grinned,

"Oh yeah. Real well. Joyce is a hell of a woman."

"She's stubborn. Figured she would be your type."

"Oh, and Eleven isn't?" Hopper scoffed. "That girl would walk through fire if she had to for you. Ain't nobody talking her out of it either. We sure do have a type." Mike chuckled a little and nodded in agreement.

"Hey, Hop, how's Will doing? I haven't seen him since Sunday."

"He's doing about the same. Kid, you know anything about this waitress he's been talking about?" Hopper asked him curiously. "I'm excited to see that he's got a crush. He gets all giddy when he talks about her. Is that something you can help... give him a little push with? He's shy, and he doesn't think that with... his condition... that he can get involved. His mother's worried. Won't stop asking me to talk to him man to man. I really don't want to try and be his dad."

"He doesn't want that either, trust me. I'll do what I can, Hop. Maybe I can rope Dustin and Lucas into helping me set them up," Mike smiled. He stood and pushed the chair back in place.

"You're good kids."

"Not really," Mike laughed, and Hopper let out a little chuckle himself. "I should get back to my desk. I'll keep you updated about Will if you'll let me know about what you find at your place. Deal?"

"Deal. Now go do some actual work, Wheeler."

"After you, Sheriff," Mike winked, disappearing through the door, and Hopper just shook his head and laughed at himself. He really hadn't done much of anything all day. Hawkins was relatively quiet, which he couldn't complain about. He'd had enough excitement for a lifetime, and he wasn't really looking forward to any more. In fact, he hoped it stayed quiet all the way to his retirement.

Eleven didn't really like going anywhere without Mike or one of their friends with her. She had been attacked when she was alone on two separate occasions, so she used Mike's home phone to call Dustin. He was a large person physically, built with nothing but muscle and skin. If anyone wanted to hurt her, they would probably think twice with the lumbering Dustin walking beside her.

He was happy to escort her to the store, and even bought some Eggo waffles for her. She didn't have money of her own, and he didn't really want to risk her getting arrested because she was planning to just steal them as she had done before. No, he wanted to avoid all

run-ins with the law, even though he was pretty sure Hopper wouldn't keep Eleven at the station for very long.

The diner wasn't far from Will's house, and Dustin suggested they walk there to visit him for a little bit. He planned to call the station once he got down there and let Mike know where Eleven was so he didn't freak out if he got home early for some reason. They took a shortcut through the woods, not expecting any monsters or lab coats to come after them. It all seemed to be over. But they were wrong.

Ten minutes into their trip through the forest, Dustin was suddenly struck by something hard and heavy, sending him to the ground instantly. He let out a long groan, his vision blurring and his head spinning, throbbing, from the blow. Eleven whirled around, only to have something brought around her eyes from behind. It was soft, like cloth, but not very large because it didn't cover her nose or her mouth. Only her eyes.

"Dustin!" She screamed, her arms and hands reaching out around her. She heard another grunt of pain from Dustin, followed by some thuds like something hard hitting something hollow. "Dustin?!"

"El, run," Dustin shouted, a sharp cry escaping him as he took another blow to his ribs. It was a cheap shot, and it disoriented him, leaving him vulnerable to whoever was kicking him around. It was a guy Dustin didn't know and didn't recognize, but when he looked over at Eleven, he knew exactly what it was about. "Jesse, you son of a bitch." Eleven panicked at the name, trying to jerk forward. Jesse, who she assumed was the one holding the cloth over her eyes, jerked her back by the cloth and pulled her against his chest, tightening his grip on the band around her eyes.

"You know what they say, what goes around comes around," she heard Jesse's voice, though she knew it wasn't directed at her. She was confused, unsure of what Dustin and Jesse had to do with one another.

"Dustin?" She called out.

"If you're here for me, Jesse, then just let Eleven go."

"Oh, no, I can't do that either. See, because of her, I'll never see my sister again. She didn't rescue Brenner, so they killed her. They killed my sister," Jesse told them. "Now they're after me. No loose ends, they say. Tie 'em all up, they told me. They let her die, because I didn't do what I promised. If you think that I'm not out for blood, you're wrong. For now, yours will do, Dustin." The other guy, Jesse's friend, Dustin assumed, threw a blinding punch, sending Dustin to the ground again. He slipped out of consciousness.

"Jesse, please," Eleven whimpered.

"Brenner said something about this before. If you can't see, you can't use those neat little powers of yours. I figured this was the only way I could get anything done," he explained. Eleven was stuck in darkness, trying to listen for Dustin, but he was quiet. The thuds had stopped completely, and all she could hear were the leaves crunching under someone's feet. Her arms started to flail, desperately trying to reach backwards to hit Jesse or push him away, but it was futile. She couldn't do much of anything to him while he was behind her.

"Let go," she continued to squirm. Suddenly her legs were kicked out from underneath her, and she was shoved to the ground, that cloth never loosening in the slightest. She put her hands flat against the ground and tried to push up, but it wasn't working, not in the slightest. Suddenly, she could feel the bottom of a shoe on her back, and she was kicked back to the leaves. "Dustin!" She screamed, starting to panic as she was pinned between the shoe and the ground pressing into her chest and stomach. "Mike, Mike!"

"What do we do with her now? I'm not killing anyone" A second voice asked, one she had never heard before. She quieted, trying to listen for Jesse to decide her fate.

"I know something we can do, and it'll only hurt her a little," Jesse told his companion. Eleven started to squirm more, but suddenly the shoe was replaced by hands on her shoulders, keeping her shoved down against the ground. "I wasn't told much about you, but they showed me a picture. You grew into quite the woman, Eleven." She felt fingers run through her hair. "But maybe we should make you match those pictures again. As much as we can."

Eleven squeezed her eyes shut, waiting for the pain, waiting for whatever they were going to do to her. She continued to push against the ground, though she moved nowhere. She continued to squirm, though it didn't help her get free. She didn't have much of a choice. They were stronger, and if she couldn't see, she couldn't fight them with the only strength she had. Tears slid down her cheeks, falling to the leaves underneath her as she felt a harsh tug on her hair.

31. Chapter 31

Hey guys! Hope everyone had a great holiday! It's been busy for me, which is why I haven't updated yet, but I'm getting to it now! Sorry for the wait, and I hope you enjoy the chapter you guys :D I usually end my fics at 40 chapters, which we're getting close to XD I suppose I should consider a sequel... what do you guys think? Enjoy the update, and leave a little review if you're feeling generous :D love you guys!

Chapter 31:

Dustin stirred only because he could hear crying. It was loud enough to wake him from the blurry unconsciousness that Jesse's friend punched Dustin into. He groaned and pushed himself up from the leaves, blinking rapidly to clear his vision. When he could finally see, Dustin looked over to see the guy who knocked him out pinning Eleven down with his hands on her shoulders, while Jesse sat on her lower back and sawed at a chunk of her hair until it was all cut loose. He tossed it to the side and grabbed another bundle, working the sharp edge of his knife against it.

Eleven was sobbing, her hands balled into fists with grass and leaves sticking out from between her fingers. He shook his head, then rushed the two men holding Eleven down. Dustin knocked them both to the side, throwing punches without really caring where they landed or who they hit. Eleven rolled onto her side, then yanked the cloth away from her eyes. She focused her intense glare on Jesse specifically. He lifted from the ground with ease, knocking both Dustin and the other guy to the side. They watched in awe and horror as Eleven threw Jesse backwards into the thick trunk of a huge oak tree.

Jesse's friend took off running as soon as Jesse hit the ground again. His eyes were wide and fearful, and he tried to crawl away. Eleven stood and took a few steps towards Jesse, but Dustin grabbed her arm, holding her back.

"You can't kill him," he told her. "Hopper won't have a choice but to

come looking for you. You don't want to deal with that kind of trouble, El, trust me." She broke her focus, turning instead to look up at Dustin. Her hair was much shorter now, with uneven layers and sawed off ends. Dustin frowned. "Let me take you to Nancy. She will help you with it." He ran a hand through her hair gently, starting from the front and moving to the back, surprised by how much they had managed to cut away with a pocket knife. "Then we'll get you home."

"What if he comes back?" Eleven asked, her eyebrows furrowed. "He can't come back."

"He won't. If he manages to crawl out of Hawkins, I'll get Hop to make sure he stays gone. Every cop in Hawkins will know he's trouble. It'll be okay, El. Come on." He offered her his arm, though she figured he should need more help walking than she did. After all, Dustin had taken quite the beating himself after being blindsided by Jesse and his friend. He had a split lip and a bruise on his cheek under his left eye. She wished she could have done more, that she could have stopped it all from happening in the first place.

She reached up as they walked, feeling, for the first time, how much of her hair they had actually cut away. She could feel the weight missing, and that's how she knew in the first place they had taken a good bit of it from her. Her swollen, red eyes flooded over with tears again. Mike had loved her hair. He used to run his fingers through it, bury his face in it, and even pull on it in certain situations. Most of it was gone again. Not nearly as much as when she was young, but it still broke her heart that they had taken her pretty hair away from her.

Mike rushed out of the station, jumping into his car and speeding off towards Will's. Dustin had taken Eleven there after the incident with Jesse. Mike had been told that Dustin stopped Eleven from killing the two boys that attacked them. On one hand, Mike understood why Dustin did what he did, but on the other, he kind of wished that Dustin had just let her kill them. At least then he could count on them never coming back. He hadn't even gotten all of the details before running out to his car, leaving the phone still hanging off his desk.

Will, Dustin, and Lucas were all standing around on the front porch when Mike got there. He hurried up the steps, practically panting by the time he stopped. Mike looked over at Dustin first, then at Will.

"How is she?"

"Not too happy," Lucas said quickly, not wanting to waste time explaining all of it to Mike. "Just go inside, Mike. She'll be glad to see you." He looked back to Dustin, who just nodded in agreement. Mike didn't ask any more questions. He pushed through the front door.

Nancy was standing in the kitchen, and when she turned, Mike could see that Eleven was sitting at the table next to Nancy. He blinked at her for a moment, confused. In Nancy's hand, he noticed a pair of scissors, and all around their feet were tiny clips of Eleven's hair. He was stunned to see that Eleven's previously shoulder length waves were now gone. Instead, her hair stopped at her jawline, and it was layered and a little more curly now. His eyes fell to the little bits of hair on the floor, but it wasn't nearly enough to account for the hair that was missing.

"What happened?" He asked her. Eleven's head fell, and he could tell that she had been crying. Her cheeks were still flush and her eyes were still red. He walked towards her slowly, then knelt down in front of her, resting his hands on her knees. He looked up into her eyes, trying to show her that he was being sincere. "Eleven, you don't have to be ashamed." She didn't say anything, just turned her gaze towards the floor again, not wanting to look him in the eyes because she couldn't fight back the tears if she did.

"They were going to cut it all off," Nancy said to help Mike fill in the blanks. "Just to be cruel." She folded her arms over her chest. "Dustin said he woke up in time to save some of it, but... Eleven still isn't very happy about it. Said she wasn't pretty anymore."

"What?" Mike scoffed, looking back at Eleven. "Of course you're still pretty, El."

"That's what I said," Nancy sighed. "She's not listening. It just happened. She probably just needs time. She's been through a lot lately." Nancy ran a hand through her own hair, knowing how hurt

and upset she'd be if someone had cut it all off. in that respect, she sympathized with Eleven intensely. the poor girl had already been through so much, and now something she liked very much about herself had been taken away. Even though Eleven was an adult now, she was still learning, still growing mentally. Self-esteem was important to any young woman, especially one as impressionable as Eleven.

"Eleven," Mike said her name softly, and she finally brought her gaze to meet his. She pulled her bottom lip between her lips, biting down a little harder than intended. Mike combed through her hair with his fingers, pushing it back out of her eyes and letting his hand rest on the back of her neck that was no longer covered by her thick waves. It was bare now, just barely exposed. "El, listen to me. I don't care what your hair looks like. I don't. I loved it because it was yours, not because it was long. If you didn't have any at all, I would love it just the same. Your hair isn't why I want to be with you. All I need that beautiful brain."

"My brain?" she questioned.

"Yes. It's what makes you who you are, El. It's what makes you so sweet and feisty and stubborn and everything else that I love about you. Your hair doesn't matter. As long as you're still the Eleven that I know and love, I'll never stop wanting you." He ran his hand over her hair again. "You're pretty, no matter what. You always will be. Don't worry about your hair." She stared into his eyes for a minute, then just nodded. She brought her own hand up to touch her curls, then dropped it to rest her palm against Mike's cheek, her fingertips burying themselves in his hair. She leaned forwards and kissed him softly.

"Thank you, Mike."

"Of course, El. Of course." He lifted himself enough to hug her, then stood and brought her up to her feet with him. Eleven looked up at Nancy and gave her a half-hearted smile.

"Thank you, Nancy. For fixing it."

"I think it looks good. I'm pretty proud of it." She smiled back, hoping

that Eleven would feel a bit better now. Johnathan came from the back room, nodding towards Mike when he saw him. "Do you guys need anything else?" Nancy asked.

"No," Mike shook his head. "I'm just going to get her home and into the shower." Nancy nodded. Eleven had some dirt smudged on her cheeks and her hands were dirty from grabbing at the leaves and grass while she was pinned. "Thanks for helping her, Nance. I'll see you soon." He headed for the door, pulling Eleven along behind him. Nancy watched them leave, then turned back to Johnathan, who greeted her with a soft kiss to her cheek.

"Seems like the world's against her, doesn't it?" He commented, wrapping his arms around Nancy's waist and pulling her close. She sighed.

"Kind of is. She's not meant to be a part of it. Always seems like the world turns on people who aren't normal. I just hope Mike knows what he's in for with her..." She frowned. "I don't want to lose my baby brother."

"He knows, and he's smart," Johnathan reassured her. "No one is going to let anything happen to either of them, Nancy. I can promise you that." She looked up at him and nodded, laying her head against his shoulder.

"I hope you're right."

"I know I am."

Dustin sat on the front porch steps as Mike's car pulled out of the driveway. His elbows rested on his knees, and he took a deep breath once they were gone. Lucas noticed that he was deep in thought over something, so he plopped down on the old wooden step beside him. Lucas nudged his friend with his shoulder, raising an eyebrow at him.

"What's got you so quiet?"

"I was just thinking," Dustin shrugged his shoulders, glancing over at Lucas then dropping his gaze down to his feet. "It's stupid, and I'm

stupid for thinking about it." Lucas was even more confused now. He cleared his throat,

"You going to tell me or will I have to force it out of you?"

"Mike can't know."

"I won't tell."

"I was just... thinking. About Eleven."

"What about her?" Lucas raised his other eyebrow, his confusion turning to shock. He hoped that Dustin wasn't going to say something that he couldn't take back. Things were easier to ignore if they weren't told to someone else. If it was what Lucas thought it was, then he didn't want to know after all. Dustin sat back, rubbing his hands over his knees for a moment before standing up.

"Let's talk privately. Okay? You're probably not going to like what I'm going to tell you."

"You don't love her, do you?" Lucas frowned at Dustin. His cheeks flushed.

"Lucas. Inside. Please."

"Fine." Lucas sucked in a deep breath then stood with him. He followed his friend into the house, though he was a little nervous about hearing Dustin out. He wasn't sure what could be worse than Dustin having a crush on Eleven. That was Mike's girl, one hundred and ten percent. Eleven would never love anyone else, and they all knew it. Dustin was only asking for pain if that was what he was thinking about. Lucas hoped not, but he didn't know what else would make Dustin look so worried. Then again, when Lucas really thought about it, a little crush was the least of their worries. It had to be something else, something more, for Dustin to be so concerned with it that he couldn't tell Mike. When he thought about what it could be, Lucas kind of hoped it was just a crush.

32. Chapter 32

Hey guys! sorry for the wait! Was super busy XD Had a party last night and hangover today, yikes... Anyways! Happy New Year :D Hope everyone has an amazing year this year! To the guest who said "You haven't updated since last year :(" You made my whole fucking night XD That made me laugh. Thank you. But now the wait is over! Enjoy and leave a little review for good luck this new year ;D

Chapter 32:

"I'm just saying Lucas, we have to be careful."

"No," Lucas said a little more stern than he meant. "What you're saying is that you think our favorite X-Man is possibly a cold-blooded killer. She's not like that, Dustin. You know her. After everything that guy did to her-"

"Stop," Dustin cut him off, standing up from Will's bed and shaking his head. "I'm not saying she's a cold-blooded killer. I'm not saying she's a murderer or anything like that. I know what he did. I was there, Lucas. All I'm saying is that if we don't want serious trouble with Hopper and the cops and everything else, we have to keep a very close eye on Eleven. People will always be after her. Those asshole Lab Coats aren't going to stop hunting her anytime soon, even with Brenner dead. Eleven can't just kill everyone that tries to hurt her. We need to find another way. We need to watch her."

"They deserve it," Lucas frowned. "She killed before, and Hop cleaned it all up. No one found out. Let her defend herself, Dustin."

"Hopper won't risk his life and career for her every time she turns around and kills someone, even if they do deserve it. He's got too much to lose, and we can't ask him to keep cleaning up behind her. Eleven has to be monitored and controlled."

"You sound like one of them."

"I don't care what you think, Lucas. I'm going to do something about it. At the lab, they have those little things Mike told us about. The ones that make that really high pitch noise that keeps her from using her powers. I'm going to ask Hopper to help me get our hands on one."

"You're willingly going to scramble her brain? For what? Defending herself?" Lucas scoffed at Dustin. "Man, now I know why you don't want Mike to know. He's going to be so pissed if he finds out you're looking for weapons to use against his girlfriend. It's not okay, no matter what. I trust Eleven. She isn't going to do anything stupid, Dustin."

"You weren't there, Lucas!" Dustin snapped. "You didn't see the anger in her eyes. She was ready to kill him, and even if he deserved it, that's not for Eleven to decide. It was bad enough she put him in the hospital. He's going to run his mouth about her and what she can do, I'm sure. No one will believe him, but still. There can't be anymore like that, Lucas. I know you care about her. We all do. She's our superhero. But if you think for one second she's somehow immune to the laws and rules of man, you're wrong."

Lucas just stared at him for a minute, thinking deeply. He knew that Dustin had a valid point, and that Dustin really only wanted to look out for Eleven and protect her, but the idea of purposefully hurting Eleven for any reason just didn't sit well with Lucas. Lucas also knew it wouldn't sit well with Mike either, and that was the reason that Dustin didn't want anyone else but Lucas to know.

"I'm not going to help you," Lucas shook his head, "but I ain't gonna tell Mike. That's as much as I can do for you, man. I'm sorry. I don't agree, but... I know that you're at least a little bit right. I don't want to screw Hopper over." Dustin just nodded at him, then left the room to return to the others before they came looking for them. Lucas lingered back for a moment, pinching the bridge of his nose in frustration.

He didn't want to be pitted against Eleven and Mike if it ever came down to it. They were all his friends, but he knew that trouble was ahead if Mike found out about Dustin's plan. Hopper worked with Mike. It would be hard for him to hide it forever, and when Mike did

find out, he wouldn't be happy about it. Eleven was his world after all. Mike would defend Eleven to his last breath, even against his best friends.

Mike buried his fingers in Eleven's hair, pulling her head up to his so he could kiss her roughly, passionately, before shifting so that she was sitting in his lap instead of laying underneath him. His hand dropped away from her freshly cut hair, down to the bare skin of her back, his fingertips ghosting over her spine, causing her to tilt her head back and groan a little. He took the opportunity he had to ravage her throat, kissing and nipping at the skin, leaving little mark all the way down to her collarbone. Eleven shifted her hips against his, causing him to suck in a breath.

"You're driving me crazy," he said softly, moving his hand back up into her hair, tangling his fingers in the short waves. Eleven smirked back down at him for a moment before he tugged her head back against by the hair he balled into his fist. She winced a little, but he didn't loosen his grip. Instead, he laid her back again, placing himself between her legs now. "Should I be more gentle?" He purred in her ear.

"No," she panted, grabbing at his shirt. She was just about to tug it over his head when the doorbell rang. Mike let out a frustrated groan, then laid his head down against her shoulder. It rang again, so he hopped up from the bed, fixing his shirt before heading into the living room. He took a deep breath, then yanked open the door.

"What?" He paused when he saw Steve standing there with Cathy of all people. His eyebrows furrowed. "What the hell are you two doing here?" He demanded to know. Cathy's makeup had run down her cheeks, which made it obvious that she had been crying. Mike's expression softened, but he still wasn't thrilled about seeing two of his least favorite people making an appearance on his doorstep.

"We need your help," Steve sighed. "Cathy's sister disappeared. There's no trace of her, nothing. Her car was left running in their driveway, and all of her belongings are still in the car, like she had been trying to leave and... something happened."

"Steve said you might know what happened," Cathy sniffed. "We have to find her, Mike. Please help me." Mike rested his head against the door frame, closing his eyes for a moment and pondering. Even though he resented Cathy an awful lot for many reasons, Cathy's sister was a kid, barely sixteen. She didn't deserve what Mike knew probably happened to her.

"Was there any blood in the car?" Mike asked.

"A tissue with some blood on it, but she has nosebleeds a lot. Why does that matter?" Cathy asked.

"Damn it, Steve," Mike groaned. "You know what you're asking, don't you?"

"I wouldn't if it wasn't an emergency," Steve grimaced. "It's her baby sister, Mike. You never gave up on Will, so how can you expect her to give up?" Mike hit his head against the door frame a couple times out of anger and frustration, then pushed himself upright again. "Please help her, Mike. If you don't hurry, then she's not coming back. You know that."

"Will someone please tell me what's going on?" Cathy demanded angrily. "Where's Sarah?!"

"Someplace really bad," Mike said with a sigh. "Only one person can go look for her. She may already be dead for all we know, but..." Mike ran his hands down his face. "But I'll see if Eleven will look."

"Thank you," Steve let out a breath of relief. "I know what it does to her, but thank you, Mike."

"Don't thank me. I don't have to go there."

"If she is there, then my dad has connections to the people who own the lab up there. Not the ones who work there, but like... the land. He has no idea about... everything. But I can go after Sarah. I won't ask anyone else to go in there after her, but I just need to know if she's in there still, if it's even worth it to go in after her. If it is... I'll go myself." Steve put an arm around Cathy, and Mike wanted to throw up. They seemed to be involved somehow, maybe dating. He

didn't know, and he didn't care. Mike just wasn't ready to ask Eleven to go back to that horrible place.

"You're an idiot, Steve," Mike frowned.

"You would do the same for Eleven."

"Get the hell out of here," he rolled his eyes. "I'll call when I know." Mike didn't wait for a response. He closed the door and locked it, standing there for a moment, wondering what the hell he was supposed to tell Eleven. She was going to have to go in after a girl as a favor to someone they both hated. The worst part is that Eleven would do it. She would do it because Mike asked her to, because Mike knew that Sarah was just an innocent girl, and if Mike said that it had to be done, then Eleven wouldn't really question it.

He sulked back into the bedroom. Eleven was sitting on the edge of the bed, her top still off, but Mike wasn't in the mood anymore. She noticed, too, as soon as he walked in, that something was wrong. She stood up and crossed her arms over her chest.

"Mike?" She questioned.

"I need to ask you for something, and... I'm really sorry about it, El."

"What?" She asked, even more concerned now. He was looking at the ground instead of in her eyes, and Mike only did that when something was wrong, when something bad was happening that he was worried about. "Mike? What?"

"I need you to look for someone," he told her, and she understood immediately. "It's taking people again, El. We have to... We have to do something about it. Cathy's little sister... She might be in the Upside Down. The Demogorgon might have taken her, and they want us to look. We don't have to really go there, but... if you could... just look there tonight somehow..."

"I will," she told him, taking his hands in hers. "I will for you." Mike's jaw tightened, and he squeezed his eyes shut. Every muscle in his body wanted to protect Eleven from what visiting the Upside Down did to her, but he knew he had to do the right thing. Someone's life

was on the line, and as long as Eleven didn't actually have to go there, he couldn't justify risking someone's life to protect Eleven from being scared.

"I'm so sorry, El," he said softly. Eleven wrapped her arms around his waist and hugged him tightly, resting her cheek against his chest. She didn't want to go back, never again, not after leaving Papa there to die. It terrified her to think about it, but Mike needed her. She couldn't tell him no. Eleven would have done anything for Mike, no matter what it cost her. Mike knew that, and it tore him to pieces inside. "I'll be here when you come back."

"I know," she nodded against his chest. "It's okay, Mike."

"Promise?"

She looked up at him and nodded, "I promise."

33. Chapter 33

Chapter 33:

Eleven sat in the bed with her knees pulled up to her chest, not really wanting to go to sleep when she knew she was going to end up in that awful place again. It was tiring, always have to go back there, to face the monsters that she spend seven years hiding from and fighting just to stay alive. For Cathy, nonetheless, that awful woman. Eleven wanted nothing to do with her, but Mike asked her to rescue Cathy's sister. If Mike asked, Eleven had to do it.

Mike came into the room, closing the door behind him and peeling off his shirt to get ready for bed. Eleven looked over at him, and Mike could clearly see the stress in her expression, the fear in her eyes. It made him feel guilty, extremely guilty. He wished for nothing more than the strength to tell Cathy no, to tell Steve to go look himself, but Mike knew that it was a risk, a life or death risk. He wouldn't condemn Steve or Cathy to death, no matter how much he honestly disliked them. It wasn't in Mike's nature to be that cruel.

"El, are you okay?" He asked, though the answer was obvious. She just nodded at him and turned her face away, back towards the bathroom door, just staring mindlessly with her chin rested on her knees. "You don't have to lie or pretend with me, El," he sighed, crawling into the bed beside her. "I don't need you to act like you're stronger than you are. It's okay to be scared."

"It won't change it."

"What?"

"Being scared. Won't make it different. I still have to go," she said as best as she could, her vocabulary still incredibly limited, though it had improved since she returned. Her eyes flicked to him briefly to see the expression on his face. He knew it was true, and he didn't even know what to say in response that time. Eleven frowned. "Don't worry, Mike. You don't need to."

"I'll always worry about you," he told her firmly. "Until the day I die,

I'll worry." He snaked an arm around her shoulder and pulled her down to his chest. She let her knees fall, accepting her new position with her head leaning against his firm chest. She took a deep breath, then relaxed into him, her own hands reaching up to grab onto his arms and hold tight. "I know you're scared. I'm sorry, El, I really am. After everything... to ask you to go back there... it's wrong of me."

"I have to."

"You don't, but... it's the only safe way to know for sure if Sarah is there. If she is, and if she's alive, then we don't have to do anything anymore. Steve said he'll go alone, though he'll probably hire people to go with him."

"Johnathan."

"Hm?"

"He'll go with him."

"Oh," Mike nodded in understanding. He made a face, "I don't know about that one. They were friends, at one time, but... things have gotten messier since then. Nancy left Steve to be with Johnathan, and when they got into it, Johnathan came to Nancy's defense." It was a rough situation, but part of Mike hoped that Johnathan would go with Steve. At least Johnathan knew what it was. Johnathan and Nancy both had even been there before, though Mike also hoped Nancy stayed out of it. However, he was well aware that if Johnathan went, then Nancy would, too.

"Can we..." Eleven began, but trailed off for a moment. She took a deep breath. "Yesterday... before they came... can we do it again?"

"You want to finish where we left off?" He asked with a devilish smirk. Eleven looked up at him, her cheeks flushing shyly, but she nodded. Mike moved from her side, shifting until he was sitting in front of her instead. He grabbed her ankles, pulling her legs until her whole body slid down from its upright position. Once she was flat on her back, Mike crawled up to her, his hips between her knees that bent again. She shook her head, and he paused. He raised an eyebrow. "What?"

Suddenly his whole body tilted back like he was drunk or something. Before he could move or say anything to protest, he felt a weird pressure on his chest that was forcing him down onto the bed. His eyebrows furrowed in concern, but when Eleven crawled on top of him, sitting up with her hands flat against his chest, he understood what happened. There was a small drop of blood under her nostril.

"You shouldn't use your powers unless you need them," he grinned up at her. When he tried to sit up, though, the invisible pressure forced him back down. His gaze narrowed. "What are you doing, El?"

"I want to. Like this." She slid back off of his hips slightly, just enough to reach down and undo his jeans. Mike wanted to move to help her, but he was oddly fixed in his current position. He didn't really like not being able to move, it felt constricting, but at the same time, Eleven's sudden dominance turned him on a little. Once she got his pants undone, she sat back and dragged them down his hips and legs, all the way off and to the floor. Her eyes fell on him for a moment, taking in the image of his now firm and solid member as it sat exposed. Mike blushed.

"El, don't stare. It's weird," he said, looking away for a moment. She stood up on the mattress, a little wobbly at first, but she steadied herself quickly. Eleven shimmied out of her own shorts and underwear, then pulled off her shirt and left it all where she had been standing. She carefully lowered herself again, sitting on Mike's hips, just underneath where he really wanted her to be. Eleven took him in her hand, and Mike groaned a little. "This isn't fair," he breathed, biting down on his lip. He tried to move again, and this time she let up. The blood was starting to drip now, and she reached up quickly to wipe it with the back of her hand. Mike grabbed her wrist, bringing her hand down to clean the red smear from her hand with the blanket.

"I want to stay up here," she told him, her tone firm and unwavering. He grinned,

"Then stay up there. But," he said, grabbing her hips with his hands and pulling her forward a little. Eleven lifted her hips so she didn't hurt him, since she had gathered that that particular body part was quite sensitive. When she raised herself, Mike took the opportunity to

position himself better, then he pulled her back down quickly, and he slid inside of her with relative ease. Eleven let out a gasp, followed by a soft moan as he pulled her down all the way, so that every inch of him was buried in her, drawing a heavy breath from his own lips. Then, she winced and jerked up a little.

"It hurts," she whined, holding herself up a little. "Too much, Mike. It hurts." Mike didn't tell Eleven that her expression only turned him on more, but he didn't pull her back down again. He loosened his grip on her hips.

"You do it, then. Let yourself adjust. Take it little by little." She looked at him and nodded, starting to move her hips back and forth, letting her body adjust to the sudden intrusion. Mike bit into his lip harder, trying not to let out all of the shameless noises he wanted to let out. The movement of her hips was driving him wild. She slid down a little further, holding herself there, waiting patiently. After a few minutes of working her body around his, she let herself slide down all the way, and this time, it didn't hurt as bad. "Better?" Mike asked, smiling up at her. She nodded. "Alright then."

Mike's hand found its way into the back of her hair, fingers tangling in the short mass of curls, grabbing a handful of it tightly in his fist. Eleven let out a small whimper, her head tilting back to ease some of the pressure, though she didn't want him to remove that hand. Mike sat upright finally, glad that the pressure was gone. He ravaged her neck, not bothering with his hips for the moment, just keeping himself in place inside of her.

He moved his lips to hers, kissing her hotly, deeply, exploring every inch of her lips and tongue with his own. He couldn't be close enough to her, even though her chest was pressed against his with no room to spare, he still craved more, needed more. The hand buried in her hair tightened its grip, and she winced again in pain. It only spurred him on though, even if he felt a little guilty for being turned on by a sound of pain from her.

Mike pulled himself away from her, then dragged her off the bed with him. He turned her around quickly and pushed her up against the wall by the bed, her chest pressing into it, and her palms flat against it. His hand never left her hair, and he pulled it back a little.

"Mike?" She panted, trying to turn her head enough to look back at him. He was being rougher than usual, quieter, too. Eleven was a little concerned. He flipped her back around, his hand finally falling away from her tangled curls. Instead, he cupped her face, bringing her closer to him to kiss her. It was reassuring, and her concern flitted away.

Her back hit the wall, and he reached down to lift her by her legs, using the wall as extra support. Mike shifted until he slipped inside of her again, drawing another moan, making her grin at him this time. It was an expression he wasn't used to seeing on her face during sex, though the confidence was welcomed. Using the wall and his strength to hold her, Mike began bouncing her up and down, and she got a little louder than usual. Her groans and pants and cries of pleasure fell on excited ears, and all of the noises only cause Mike to become more needy. His pace quickened, and Eleven knew that if he kept it up much longer, she wasn't going to be able to stop herself from going over that edge.

"Mike," she panted, grabbing onto his shoulders tightly. "Mike, wait. Not yet."

"Yes," he argued, not slowing in the slightest. "Go ahead, El. It's okay." Her grip on his shoulders tightened to the point that her fingernails were digging in his skin, hard enough, and deep enough to draw blood. Mike hardly paid attention to the stinging. Her face was driving him crazy, with her closed eyes and her flushed cheeks. He sped up again, and after only a moment or two, Eleven's whole body tensed in his arms, and she tightened up all over, forcing Mike to let her down to her feet to stop himself from losing it before pulling away.

She slid to the ground, her legs too wobbly and unstable to hold her up anymore. She was still groaning and moaning, still panting heavy from the rigorous motions of Mike's hips. Eleven brought her knees together, though that only caused another aftershock to ripple through her. She grinned up at Mike.

"Better," she nodded. "Much better." Mike reached down to help her to her feet, pulling her down onto the bed with him and cradling her close.

"Think of me, then, when you wake up there. Know you're safe in my arms."

"Okay," she breathed, happy to be in his arms, to feel the heat of his bare skin on hers. She curled up against him as closely as she could, trying to settle herself down in preparation for what she knew she still had to do, despite the pleasantness that came before. "Thank you. For the... For letting me think of something else."

"A distraction," he told her. "That's the word you want."

"Distraction."

"A damn good one, too," he chuckled. "Just relax now, okay. think of me. Focus on me."

"I will," she smiled against his chest, holding him as close to her as she could. Eleven didn't want to go anywhere, not in the slightest. She knew that she had to, because Mike told her that she had to. There was no other way to make sure Cathy's sister was alive. Eleven pushed aside her own wants and fears for Mike, and she did as told and began to relax as best as she could, building up the courage to let herself fall asleep.

Hey guys! Hope you liked the smut :D I knew it was time for some more intimacy, though it was a little different this time XD hope you still like it! Leave a little review, please :) I live for them, you guys know that though lol Talk to you soon!

34. Chapter 34

Sorry for the wait! I still run the forum, and am writing a book, and I find it hard to divvy up my time properly every time XD But I hope you guys are holding out for me, because I'm not quitting on this story. Enjoy the chapter! It may be a little shorter than usual because here is where the build up begins for the end lol I'll try to update sooner next time :) Leave a little review if ya don't mind. I love getting them!

Chapter 34:

Mike couldn't sleep. He knew that when Eleven came back from where she was going, she was going to need his love and affection. It worried him to think that she may have woken up alone, frightened and crying. He couldn't fall asleep with that thought in the back of his mind, so he sat up in his bed, looking over the words of a book without really absorbing any of it. His mind was elsewhere, worried only about Eleven. He hated that she had to go there for Cathy of all people, but Mike couldn't let an innocent girl die without trying to help at least. At the same time, he wasn't willing to risk Eleven either.

Finally, after what felt like hours and hours, Eleven jolted to life, panting heavily with tears streaming down her cheeks. She looked over at Mike, then jumped towards him, landing in his lap. She clung to him, clung to his neck, while she laid her head on his chest. He didn't question her at first; he just held her to let her know that it was all alright, that she was safe with him again.

"I'm here, El," he said softly, running his hand down over her shoulder. "What did you see, El? Was there a girl there?" He hated having to ask so soon, but he knew that Cathy and Steve were probably awake, too, waiting on a call. It was hard to rest when a loved one was in danger. Mike knew that all too well. "Eleven, did you see Sarah anywhere?"

"Yes," Eleven inhaled deeply, trying to settle herself. She hated being so afraid and shaken up all of the time, but it seemed like she just couldn't get away from the monster and the Upside Down. It saw her

again. It stalked up to her and hissed loudly in her face, showing all its teeth. When it smelled her and realized who she was, it backed down, creeping away back into the dark. It could have been worse, she knew, but it was still a terrifying experience. "She's gone."

"Gone?"

"Dead," she said a little more bluntly, not wanting to conjure up the memory of the slimy, fungus covered corpse she saw in the monster's hideout. It was a young girl, and that made it all the more heartbreaking. "I'm sorry." Mike stared at her for a moment, not wanting to believe that words that came out of her mouth, but he knew she wouldn't lie about something so serious. He shook his head.

"Don't be sorry. You did what you could. We knew that it was possible that she..." He trailed off, not really fond of the words that he planned to use. Mike took a deep breath and sat back, holding her in his lap as close to his body as he could. "It's not your fault, El. I should call them and let them know." He reached over to the house phone sitting on the nightstand. He hesitated for a moment, dreading the conversation he had to have with Steve. Mike had never been very good at delivering bad news to people, but he had gotten better while working at the police station.

He dialed the number after a few moments, and Steve quickly picked up the phone. Eleven watched as Mike stumbled through the words a little sloppily, stuttering and pausing a lot as he spoke. She felt bad. Maybe if they had been able to go looking for her sooner, then Sarah would have made it through like Will did. Then again, Eleven knew that some people were more determined to fight and survive than others.

Once Mike was done delivering the bad news, he set the phone back down on the nightstand. He looked down at Eleven, then bent down to place a soft kiss on her forehead. She gave him an empathetic look, then sat up and hugged him tighter, laying on top of him and holding him as close as she could. Neither of them were happy about the discovery, but she knew that Mike had known the dead girl. Eleven had no reason to mourn her.

"Mike?"

"Yeah?"

"Are you okay?" She asked him softly, letting her hand slide down to his shoulder and gripping it tightly. She wanted to reassure him somehow, to make it easier and lighten his load. But she knew deep down that she really wasn't capable of comforting him the way he needed to be.

"It's sad," he admitted with a heavy sigh. "I wish that it had been different, but... I did what I could. You did what you could. We should... I don't know what we should do."

"Kill it," Eleven said suddenly. "We kill it." His eyes widened a little.

"El, last time you went up against that thing, I lost you for seven years!"

"No," she shook her head, sitting up and looking at him. "I won't leave. We can kill it. A different way." Mike pondered on that thought, wondering how they would ever manage to take something like that thing down without losing her in the process.

"You want to hunt it?"

"Them," she corrected him. "There's more." She wasn't crazy about her own idea, but she knew that there weren't many options for them. Those things couldn't be left alone to run amok in the town, snatching people away to kill and devour them. No. Someone had to do something, and El knew that they were at least afraid of her. If anyone could help get rid of them, it was her, but this time, she wouldn't sacrifice herself in the process. There had to be another way, she figured, some way to kill them without sending herself back to the Upside Down.

Mike didn't want Eleven doing anything that would put her at risk, but he also knew that something had to be done. They would have the support of Hopper, and with the whole gang back in town, he figured they could come up with something. Dustin would be glad to help, and Lucas could be talked into it. Johnathan and Nancy and Steve had tried to kill one before, and they had wounded it. It had to be possible, with a whole lot of planning and firepower, to kill one of

those things. They were older now, and they had access to more than they did before. He nodded.

"Okay. I'm with you."

"Tomorrow," she said, "we call Dustin and Lucas."

"Johnathan and Nancy could help, too," he told her. "They've done this before, and they knew Sarah as well. They'll help us. I just... Eleven, I don't want to lose you ever again. I couldn't stand it... life without you. I'd be devastated. Please. Let's do this our way. Leave your powers and everything out of it. We're not entirely incapable. Trust me. Okay?"

She nodded, "Okay."

"Rest now," he told her, sliding back down onto his pillow, pulling her with him. "If we're really going to do this, we have to get some sleep and start fresh tomorrow. I'm sorry about making you go back there, El. I won't ever do it again, I promise. You can stay here with me, every night. Alright?"

"Yes," she smiled a little, her head still planted firmly on his chest. She closed her eyes, but she couldn't really go to sleep. Mike couldn't either, so they just laid there together, in each others arms, thinking about the rocky road that lay ahead of them. It may have been stupid to choose to be the saviors of Hawkins, to try and kill the things that were taking residents and slaughtering them one by one. They both knew that it couldn't go on forever. Eventually, those monsters would run out of prey, and they would spread far outside of Hawkins in search of more.

Being a hero was never really something that Eleven wanted. She fought for her survival most of the time, until Mike and the others came along. She finally had other people to fight for, to defend, and she nearly gave up her life to do so. Now, after finally getting him back, with more than they ever had before, she wasn't so sure she would sacrifice herself for strangers. For Mike, of course, but not for anyone else. It was a selfish thought that she quickly pushed away. She knew that people were dying, and she knew that Mike was going to stop it no matter what. She could either be there by his side,

helping him protect the good people of Hawkins, or she could sit back and let him do it alone. The latter wasn't an option.

"I love you," she said after a long while of complete silence. Mike run his fingers through her short mass of curls, pulling out a few tangles along the way before doing it again. A tiny smile tugged at the corner of his mouth, but he found it hard to be happy at the moment, even with hearing something he was always delighted to hear. He let out a long breath.

"I love you, too."

"Forever?"

"Forever."

35. Chapter 35

Sorry for the wait! I know I keep saying that DX my internet has been in and out for so many days and in the middle of writing this chapter before it went out and when it went to save, it all got erased. So here's take two finally. Its all smut because I wanted to try and give everyone what they want. Wasn't initially planned but eh. Enjoy! Let me know what you think :)

Chapter 35:

Eleven laid back a little nervously, her eyes focused up at the ceiling for a moment. She glanced down at Mike, who was sitting between her two bare thighs. Her lower half was naked to him. Bare. She swallowed hard and sighed.

"Mike," she whined. "Are you sure?" He ran his hands up and down her legs reassuringly, his touch slow and gentle. He nodded to her.

"Yes, El, I'm sure," he told her. "You don't have to be nervous. I promise it will feel really good. Just trust me." She nodded, then laid her head back again. Mike lowered himself, holding up his upper body with his elbows digging into the mattress. He looked up at her, then reached up to grab her hand and intertwine their fingers. "Just enjoy it."

"Okay," she bit into her bottom lip. Mike leaned forward and started slow, gentle movements of his tongue in a circle around her heated center. Eleven let out a sharp gasp, her body jerking a little. Mike sat up to check on her, but she just nodded again to let him know it was okay. Her legs started to tremble against his shoulders.

Mike got to work with his mouth again, utilizing his tongue and lips equally, pulling out all the stops for her. Eleven grabbed a handful of the sheets beneath her, whimpering and moaning as he worked his magic, her fingers still locked with his. He held her hand even tighter as he dipped a bit lower, teasing with his tongue at her entrance.

"Mike!" She gasped loudly, then used her free hand to cover her

mouth. Will and Lucas were crashing at the house after a night of drinking altogether. Dustin was sober, so he drove himself home, but Will and Lucas decided to stay.

Lucas was on the couch, watching a movie, with Will toppled over on the arm of the sofa, sound asleep and snoring softly. He only barely heard Eleven's outburst, and he smirked a little to himself, murmuring a little "my man" as he turned his attention back to the movie.

Eleven panted heavily as Mike toyed and teased her with that amazing tongue of his. It was driving her wild as it was, but then, suddenly, she felt the pressure of his finger enter her. She moaned again, louder this time, and Mike pulled back to look up at her.

"They'll hear you."

"I don't care," she huffed, not looking down at him this time. He grinned, then went back to work, his tongue dipping in and out, swirling around and flicking over that oh so sensitive spot. The pressure began to build inside of her quickly, and she couldn't hold it back in the slightest. The sensation was new to her, and so very pleasant. "Mike!" She yelped as she reached the edge.

"Come on, El," he grinned devilishly, the speed of his finger moving in and out of her becoming more rapid as her whole body tensed with pleasure. She let out a low groan, then a series of pants as a few aftershocks rippled through her, the orgasm riding out through her body. Mike removed his now sticky fingers, then sat back on the bed. "Did you like it?"

"Yes," she breathed. "I liked it a lot, Mike." He smiled wide, then flopped down on the bed beside her. Eleven rolled over and laid her head on his chest, happy to be close to him and thinking to herself how good he smelled at the moment.

"It didn't take long," he noted after a moment. She raised an eyebrow.

"Is that bad?"

"No. Very good, I think. Means I did a good job," he chuckled, turning

his head to kiss her forehead softly. "There's nothing I love more than making you feel good. In one way or another." She smiled, then relaxed against him. He ran his fingers down her back softly, thinking mindlessly about everything going on.

They had talked to Johnathan and Nancy. Even Steve heard about their plans and volunteered to help. Cathy was devastated after Sarah's death, and Steve wanted to do something about it. The whole gang was planning together, figuring what to get and how, when to do it and where. It was a lot to sort through, but it would be worth it to stop the killing.

Nancy leaned back against the couch, looking over at Johnathan. Will was gone at Mike's, and Joyce had gone to stay with Hopper. It was the first time they had been utterly and completely alone, without anyone to pick up or anything they were waiting to do.

She had stayed with him a lot since her split with Steve, though she often returned home to her parents to stay in her old room as well. Johnathan was respectful, a little too respectful, if she was being honest with herself. With everything coming up that they were going to have to face, she didn't want to waste , or have any regrets.

Taking matters into her own hands, Nancy slid over on the couch, closer to him. She sat up, then threw her leg over his, lowering herself into his lap. Johnathan looked stunned, and his eyes widened a little, whole whole body going tense. His hands stayed back and away from her for the moment, pressed firmly into the couch.

"Nancy, what are you-"

"In all this time you haven't tried anything," she cut him off, resting her hands on each of his shoulders and looking down at him. "You look at me like you want to, but you never do. Why? Do you not want to? Was I reading this wrong?"

"No, I do, I just..." His cheeks flushed, and he tore his gaze away from her, looking to the side. "I didn't think you'd want me to. You just got out of a really long relationship."

"Steve is already fucking Mike's ex, so why can't I fuck you?"

"Because you're not like that," Johnathan frowned, that particular word bothering him in that particular sentence. "You're not like Steve or Cathy. You're better than that." Her grip on his shoulders tightened a little, and she shifted in his lap.

"I've waited," she frowned down at him. "I've waited long enough. I want you to touch me." She dropped her hands from his shoulders, grabbing his wrists and lifting his hands to her hips. He let them rest there, though he was still trying to be careful of her boundaries.

"Nancy, I've never..." He trailed off, his cheeks even hotter now, redder. He was so embarrassed, so shy, that it was painful. Nancy knew she would have to take the reigns. She smiled down at him, then leaned in for a hard, heated kiss, dragging her teeth across his bottom lip gently.

"Why haven't you?" She asked when she pulled away. "Never, with anyone?"

"No one wants to date the town freak, Nance," he grimaced. "I'm not the cute kid that went missing. I'm his weird older brother who likes taking pictures. And sometimes of cute girls through windows." Nancy smiled a little, thinking back to that picture, and to their first interaction.

"I better have been the only one."

"You were the only one. Always." He tightened his grip on her hips a little, a desperate kind of longing growing within him as she sat in his lap.

"Let me," she said softly. Nancy sat back a little, reaching down to undo his jeans. She was glad that under his boxers he was incredibly firm. He wanted it just as bad, she discovered. "You shouldn't have waited so long. You could have had me whenever."

"I wanted it to be your decision," he said. She freed him of his boxers completely, shimmying them down his hips just enough that they were in the way. She grinned,

"Look at what you've been hiding from the world."

"Stop." His face was burning already, and she was only making it worse. She couldn't help it..he was significantly larger than Steve, and Steve was all she had ever had before. Part of her was concerned that the difference in size would hurt, but it wasn't going to stop her.

Nancy lifted herself, pushing up her skirt enough to give her legs more room. She pulled her underwear to the side, positioned him with her other hand, then slowly lowered her body down onto his firm member. Johnathan bit into his lip violently to hold back a groan, his head falling back and his eyes closing.

Nancy let out a small wince, the size proving to be enough of a difference to cause a little bit of pain. She sat still for a moment, letting herself adjust. Her eyes fell on him, on his expression. He could barely contain himself. His lip had started to bleed from his teeth digging into them. She let herself slide down the rest of the way, letting every inch of him slip into her though it hurt initially.

"Nancy," he moaned her name, and it turned her on more than she cared to admit. She smiled, then lifted herself and lowered her body again quickly. His grip on her hips tightened, and he let his head fall forward onto her shoulder. "It feels so fucking good," he breathed. "I can't... Hold out long like this."

"Its okay if you don't. Its your first time." She started to move up and down again, but he grabbed her hips and forced them down again.

"Don't move, please. Just... Let me feel it like this for a minute... Before its over..." He took deep, ragged breaths, his head against their shoulder, red face hidden from view. Nancy waited for moment, but she got impatient. She wanted to make him finish, to be the first and only to ever do it. She couldn't wait forever.

She pried his hands from her hips, bouncing herself up and down rapidly on his lap. He panted and moaned with each bounce, unable to be quiet, unable to hold it back. It was only a few minutes before he couldn't take it anymore.

He grabbed the edges of the sofa, and it hit him all at once. Nancy

dropped down onto him, and she felt it burst inside of her suddenly, a heat in her gut, something she hasn't expected. Johnathan tensed and spasmed, panting and trying to steady himself.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to."

"Johnathan." She grabbed his face, forcing him to look her in the eye. She hasn't pulled herself away yet, hadn't moved off of his lap. She stayed there to show he shouldn't be ashamed. "It's alright. I wanted this. All of it. Every bit of you." She kissed him. "I love you. All of you. And I always want to be able to have all of you."

"You have me," he told her with a small smile. "I'm all yours, Nancy Wheeler."

"Make me Nancy Beyers," she kissed him again. "Then I'll have all of you." He grinned, then hugged her tightly, wondering what he did to deserve her, to be able to have her like he just did, and to have a future with someone as beautiful and perfect as Nancy.

36. Chapter 36

Chapter 36:

Mike walked into the police station groggily, reaching up to wipe his eyes. He hadn't gotten much sleep the night before. Eleven had a nightmare, so he stayed up with her until she fell back asleep. He didn't mind it, but it made going to work the next morning a little more difficult. If that wasn't bad enough, as soon as he walked through the door, he saw Jesse standing by his desk.

Rage flooded through Mike instantly at the sight of the boy who had attacked Eleven on multiple occasions. Jesse turned when Mike came in, and his eyes widened a little like he didn't know he would be there.

"What the hell?" Jesse grumbled. Mike didn't bother saying anything. No words came to him in the moment, only anger. He rushed at Jesse, throwing a punch with enough force to knock Jesse back on the desk. He jerked the boy up by his collar, then hit him again. This time Jesse fell to the ground, and he dragged Mike down with him.

Papers flew from the desks and chairs toppled over as the two boys struggled with each other. Mike rolled until he could pin Jesse down, throwing another punch and kneeing him in the gut. Jesse let out a pained grunt, then pushed Mike to the side, scrambling to get up.

"Get the hell off me!" Jesse snapped at him. Before Mike could force him back down, Hopper came into the front area. He grabbed Mike by the back of his shirt and dragged him up to his feet.

"Knock it off," He said angrily, shoving Mike backwards. Hopper turned to the other boy. "Both of you. If you don't stop, I'll take you both in. This is the police station for crying out loud." He turned back to Mike. "What is going on, Wheeler?"

"He's the one who went after Eleven!" Mike shouted hatefully, glaring at Jesse. "He kidnapped her, then came back and held her down while his buddy chopped her hair off with a knife. He's the guy, Hop!" It made more sense, once Hopper knew who the other boy was.

Mike has been very upset by the events with Eleven, as had everyone. However, Hopper was the sherriff. He couldn't let Mike assault someone in his station.

"What're you here for, son?" Hopper asked Jesse, an unamused and even angry expression furrowing his brow. Jesse smoothed out his shirt, then reached up to wipe the corner of his mouth.

"Before your boy here attacked me," Jesse spat, "I was here to report someone missing. My friend. He went missing in your woods. I haven't been able to find him, and he hasn't gone home. He doesn't have any family to report it."

"Good riddance to him," Mike scoffed. He knew already where Jesse's friend had more than likely ended up. Hopper knew, too. They had discussed and discussed how to deal with the issue. Hopper sighed, then reached up to run a hand down his face in frustration.

"I'll look into your missing friend."

"You know what happened to him," Jesse accused Mike. "Your big friend. He did this, didn't he? He killed him!" Mike shook his head.

"He would have been luckier if Dustin got ahold of him."

"I want you to bring that bastard in," Jesse told Hopper. "Ask him what happened to my friend. I guarantee he's the one who did it. He attacked me before."

"Listen," Hopper said, stepping closer to Jesse. "If I were you I would be awful quiet. Now, I might help you if you sit down and shut up. I ain't going after anyone for assault when you're guilty of some serious crimes, boy. I should take you in, but I don't have any evidence against you. So take careful steps, or I might just go looking."

"You know, then," Jesse grimaced. "You know who I am, and who the girl is. You know everything. All of you do." He shook his head and looked down at his feet, reaching up to pinch the bridge of his nose. "Jesus Christ. Listen to me." Jesse lifted his gaze to Hopper's, his eyes softer now, more desperate. "I am the only thing that he has. Derek... lost his parents when he was young. He went into the system until he

turned eighteen, then moved in with me. There's no one else that's going to care about him or go looking. You have to help me find him. He's my best friend."

Even Mike felt a little guilty for his previous comment after hearing Jesse level with Hopper. The chief looked over at Mike, who just gave a mindless shrug of his shoulder. Jim Hopper was an officer of the law, and if he didn't do his best to find the missing boy, he didn't deserve his badge. With a deep breath, Hop finally nodded down at Jesse, his own expression softening.

"I know where he might be."

"Mirkwood," Mike commented, the name sounding menacing after everything that happened in Hawkins when he first met Eleven, when Will was taken. He looked to Hopper. "It took Cathy's little sister, too, but Sarah is dead. If we're going to do something about it, we have to hurry."

"Dead?" Jesse asked, his eyes widening. "What do you mean? What took her?" Mike and Hopper exchanged glances.

"The people you worked for, the ones who told you to bring it Eleven," Mike began to explain, "they used to her for her... abilities. But while they were forcing her to use them, she accidentally brought something back with her. She opened this... door, and this... thing came through." He didn't know how to explain it without it sounding crazy or completely fabricated. "It takes people. It took my friend Will, but he managed to survive. We got him out. I've been in there, too, and I came back. It's not... impossible for your friend to still be alive."

"What's his name again?" Hopper asked. Jesse stared at Mike for a moment, the information settling into his head, registering in his memory. He thought about everything he'd heard and seen, and he knew that there was more to it than he was told. He experienced first hand what Eleven could do, so he knew that Mike wasn't lying about that, at the very least. The rest of it had to be true, too, he figured.

"Derek Wilson," Jesse told the chief. "Are you going to help me, then? Tell me how to get him back?"

"It isn't easy or safe, kid," Hopper warned. "You have to go to the place where this slimy son of a bitch lives, and it ain't like home, I can promise you that. It's... dark and dangerous. There's a way in, but we have to find a way to justify it. We have to go through the lab."

"Is there anyway we can do that?" Mike asked doubtfully. "I know that Brenner is dead, but the rest of the scientists and other people are still there, so someone has to be running the place, right?" Hopper nodded, then took a deep breath; he knew that Mike wasn't going to like what he was about to say, but it had to be said. "You boys planned on killing that thing, right?"

"We want to try. Nancy and Johnathan said they'd help. Steve, too."

"We'll need Eleven to get down there," Hopper said softly, walking towards the door with hopes that the boys would follow. Jesse and Mike trailed him on instinct, wanting to get closer to hear what he was going to say. Hopper was right though. Mike already didn't like this idea. "If she can get us down there, a few of us can take some weapons and go in there after whoever might still be alive. We'll kill the son of a bitch. Whatever is still alive in there, we'll kill it." He recalled for a moment the egg shaped, goo covered, thing he saw when he and Joyce went in after Will all those years ago.

"You're going to make her kill people?"

"No!" Hopper said quickly and loudly, drawing the attention of a passing officer. He lowered his voice again, focusing on Mike. "Eleven cannot kill anyone anymore, Mike. I don't know how many favors I can call in before they stop helping me out. It took a lot to cover for her last time. Doing it all over again could get me and you both fired, kid. We have to play it safe. She can't kill."

"I'll talk to her. I'll talk to everyone. We'll figure something out."

"We need a plan," Jesse finally piped in. "I'm going with you."

"Alright." Hopper pushed the door open for them. "Go on then. Get it all figured out. I'll see if I can find an easier way into the lab, but if not, let Eleven know she's going to have to help us. Report back when you have it all figure out."

"Okay," Mike nodded, not all too excited to be running back into danger. He desperately hoped he didn't have to drag Eleven along. He would much rather leave her and Will at his house, maybe with Lucas or Dustin there, too. Nancy, maybe, since he always hoped she wouldn't get involved. Mike knew first hand now how dangerous that place was after being there himself. He would be lying if he said he wasn't afraid.

Sorry it's shorter than usual :(I've been sick since last night, and I feel awful. I'm glad I could finally finish this though, and thanks for bearing with me. Hope you enjoy anyways! Let me know what you think :)

37. Chapter 37

Hey guys! I know its been a few days since I updated, and I'm sorry! I finally went to the doctor and found out I have a sinus infection, blah. I have antibiotics and should be getting better soon lol my ears and throat just hurt real bad most of the time. But don't worry about me! I got good medicine now :) Its getting close to the end now, so things will start to pick up a bit. Enjoy! Let me know what you think, guys, if ya don't mind :D

Chapter 37:

Eleven sat with her legs crossed on the bed, her hands fidgeting anxiously in her lap. She occasionally stole a glance over at Mike, who was laying beside her, sleeping peacefully. It was hard to fall asleep knowing that Mike and the others were going to be walking into danger willingly the next day, and on top of that, Eleven had to stay behind.

Mike was so afraid of losing Eleven, he wore her down until she promised to stay with Will at the apartment. Not only would getting rid of those things hurt her and possibly kill her, but they were afraid of her to begin with. If they were going to hunt it and kill it, they couldn't have it running away because Eleven was there. She understood, but she still hated that she wouldn't be there to protect Mike and the rest of her friends.

Mike stirred a little beside her, then rolled over to look at her. He sat up slowly, yawning and stretching and he did. After rubbing some of the blur out of his eyes, he focused them on her, his eyebrows furrowing a little.

"Can't sleep?" He asked her curiously. Eleven nodded, not looking up at him in return. She kept her gaze on her fidgeting hands in her lap, too deep in thought to look anywhere else. Mike scooted closer to her, then laid a hand gently on her back. "What's wrong, El?"

"You know," she said simply, and she was right. Mike did know what was wrong with her, though he asked out of concern for Eleven. He

knew deep down that he would have felt the same way if he knew Eleven was doing something dangerous for the sake of someone else. He would have insisted she stay, and even begged her if necessary.

"I do," he nodded with a sigh. "El, you know I wouldn't do this if I didn't think I had to. I'm not going alone. Hopper, Dustin, Johnathan, Nancy... They're all going to be there, and we'll look out for each other. You know we will. I'm going to come home to you, Eleven. No matter what I have to do, I'll come home to you."

"Promise?" She said softly, finally lifting her gaze to meet his. "Do you promise, Mike? Promise you'll come home." Mike stared at her for a moment, then nodded his head. She leaned over and laid her head on his shoulder, wanting nothing more than to stay in bed with him until it was all over, wrapped up in the warmth of his arms. She closed her eyes. "I'm scared."

"You don't have to be. You'll be safe with Will here."

"I'm scared for you," she corrected herself, reaching over to grab ahold of his arm. "I love you, Mike. I can't... Lose you..." He didn't say anything to that, knowing that no matter what he said, he wouldn't be able to comfort her until he returned safely from the Upside Down. Instead, he wrapped his arms around her and laid back, pulling her down with him, against his side, so he could hopefully comfort her enough to get her to sleep at least.

"I'll always come back to you. You're my whole world, El," he told her softly, his fingertips caressing her shoulder tenderly. She laid her head on his chest, curling up at his side. "Somebody has to be the good guys, the heroes. And as much as I hate Jesse with... a burning passion... I can't just sit by and let someone else die. I have to help."

"You don't."

"I do. Not just for Jesse. How many more people will the Demogorgon take if we don't do something? More innocent people, like Sarah. Could be someone we know, someone we care about." He took a deep breath, a knot forming in his chest. "We will kill it, El. If there's more, we'll kill them, too. I won't let this thing hurt anyone else."

"Please stay," she begged. "Let them do it."

"You know I can't do that. They're my friends and family... I want to be there to protect them." Mike wished she would understand, at the very least, that there was no talking him out of it. It was just something that he had to do, that they all had to do. Hawkins was in trouble, and more people would die if they didn't act soon. Still, Eleven's chest ached with worry, and she wished desperately she could stay home with Mike until it was all over.

She sat up on her elbow and looked down at him, her concerned visibly etched into her features, even through the darkness. Mike smiled up at her, then rolled towards the nightstand. He turned on the little radio that sat there, turning the dial down so that the music played softly. He laid back again so he was facing her, then leaned up to kiss her softly.

"I love you, too, El," he said quietly. "I love you more than I've ever loved anyone. You were the only thing I thought about for so long. I missed you like hell, and now that you're here, I won't let you go again. I know you want to be there to help. I know... But I won't risk losing you. All of us together will be able to take the Demogorgons down. Especially with Hop's guns."

"No more," she said after a minute. "No more talking." She laid back on his chest, her hand circling around to hold him closer to her. It was hard to believe that she missed out on so much being who locked away in a lab or in the Upside Down. Being away from Mike, for seven years, was painful enough. She couldn't stand the thought of living without him again. He was the most important thing in her life, and the only thing she had ever wanted.

Mike didn't say anything else. Words wouldn't be enough, so he didn't want to waste any. They laid together, holding each other tightly, listening to the music playing softly. Mike hummed along with the song, and it made Eleven smile. For that moment, she felt like everything was okay. Even though the next day would bring back every bit of worry and fear she had moments ago, at that moment, she was alright.

Mike was more afraid now than he ever had been before. When they

were kids, and she disappeared with the first Demogorgon, he knew that it hurt more than anything else had in his life. However, he was still a kid. Now, as an adult, his feelings were stronger and more grounded. To lose her this time would be absolutely devastating. He didn't know how he would go on without Eleven in his life.

But that wasn't the real worry. Eleven had already agreed to stay with Will, out of the Upside Down. The real concern was whether or not Mike would make it back to her. For some reason, the idea of leaving her alone in the world, never having felt that kind of loss before, scared him more than losing her. He knew she would be broken. Mike and Papa were pretty much everything she had known as far as close relationships go. Even though she had friends that would be there for her, to lose the man she loved, the only man she ever loved, would break her. Mike didn't want that to happen, and he would fight as hard as he could to avoid it.

Hopper sat at his desk, propping his feet up and leaning back. Dustin sat on the other side, holding the little metal cylinder that Hopper had managed to get ahold of. They sat in silence for a long while, before Hopper finally cleared his throat and spoke.

"I had a buddy of mine, an inspector, sneak that out of the lab. What do you want it for exactly? I wouldn't exactly consider her a danger to society anymore. She's a kid in love. Her whole world begins and ends with Wheeler."

"I know," Dustin nodded. "You didn't see her, though. She would have killed Jesse if I didn't stop her. I know that he probably had it coming, but I know that it would have been hard for you to clean up after her again. I don't want any trouble for anyone."

"I get that, but... Does it hurt her? I don't want to cause her any pain, Dustin," Hopper said seriously, eyes locked on the little piece of metal. "Only use that if you need it, if there's an absolutely clear danger to someone because of Eleven." Dustin nodded in response, shoving the gadget in his pocket quickly before leaning back in his seat.

"Thank you, Hopper," he sighed heavily. "Have you figured out how

were going to get into the lab?"

"Yeah, I got it figured out. My inspector buddy faked a report. Told them that they had black mold in their air filtration system. He's loaning us a couple of clean up suits, and were going to pretend were there to clean it out. Once were inside, I'll get us down to the gate."

"You're awesome, Hop," Dustin commented with a small chuckle. "I don't know how the hell you managed to pull this off, but I'm impressed. You going to teach us how to shoot, Hop?"

"Planned on it. Tomorrow morning. I really wish you'd boys stay out of it, but I know you're not kids anymore. Besides, I couldn't do it alone."

"Its odd to hear you admit that," Dustin teased him a little. "Maybe its because you're getting old. Without us, you'd probably throw out a hip just trying to sneak down to the gate."

"I bet I could still kick your ass," Hopper snorted with a playful roll of his eyes. "Even if you're built like a linebacker. I'd be careful what you say, I might just have to prove it."

"You're right, I should respect my elders."

"Very funny, kid," he laughed. "Go now. Get some rest. Big day tomorrow." Dustin nodded, then stood up. He felt for the cylinder in his pocket, making sure it was there before heading toward the door. "Make sure you round everyone up and bring them to the station by nine."

"Can do," he smiled a little. "Goodnight, Hop."

"Night, kid."

38. Chapter 38

Hey guys! I know its been a little while. Been sick, but now I'm starting to get better finally :) ended up having to go back to the doctor because I had an ear infection too, which was awful. But its all getting better! I will be doing a sequel for you guys :) so no worries that this one will end soon. Hope you're all still around, and leave a little review for me if you don't mind! I love hearing your opinions :)

Chapter 38:

The feeling that settled into Mikes chest when he left the next morning was something he hoped he never had to feel again. It was like he was seeing her for the last time, and even though he didn't plan on giving up so easily, he knew there was still a chance that he wouldn't make it out of the Upside Down. Not many people did.

He had gotten up a bit reluctantly, though he ended up rushing to get ready since they were meeting Hopper at a specific time that morning. Eleven was still sleeping when he was leaving. Mike couldn't help but think about how beautiful she was, as she laid there. She was sprawled out in nothing but one of his tee shirts, her bare legs tangled around a pillow. He smiled, then leaned down to kiss her cheek before heading out of the door.

It hurt more than he thought it would to click that lock behind him. Even though Will would be there soon to look after Eleven, Mike couldn't help but feel a bit guilty leaving her there alone. After everything that happened, it didn't feel right. She didn't want him to go, but a sense of duty pushed him to join the others.

Mike locked the door behind him, then slid the key under the mat for Will to use when he got there. With a heavy sigh, he trotted down the steps and headed for the car. Each step was painfully forced, and that feeling in his chest only amplified as he started his car and left the driveway.

Eleven stirred a little when she heard the rumbling of a car engine.

She rolled over sleepily, reaching out beside her for Mike. However, her hand only found the blankets and mattress where he should have been laying. She sat up slowly, yawning tiredly and looking over at the empty bed beside her. It came back to her then.

"Mike," she grumbled, then laid back on the bed. She stared up at the ceiling pensively, unhappy with the terrible emptiness beside her. "Hurry back," she said softly, rolling onto her side to make sure he was gone, to make sure it wasn't a bad dream. She let out an unhappy sigh, then forced her eyes closed again, clinging to the pillow she was tangled up with.

Johnathan waved briefly at Will as the sickly boy headed out of the door. He was glad that Will was going to be staying out of the Upside Down, and even more glad that he'd be with Eleven. She was more capable of protecting him than anyone else was, which provided a little relief.

As Johnathan was shoving supplies and ammo into his backpack, Nancy came into his room. She knocked lightly on the door to get his attention, and he looked up at her. She smiled a little, then walked in to sit on the edge of his bed.

"Hey, you," Nancy said quietly, running her hands down her legs a little nervously. "Are you ready for this?" She knew she wasn't, but she would pretend she was. After all, he was probably going to fight her over staying when she told him her news.

"I'm ready," he nodded. "As ready as I was last time." He lifted his eyes to meet hers, and he saw the conflict in them almost immediately. Nancy was never very good at hiding her feelings, especially from Johnathan. He could see through her. "What's wrong?"

"Nothing."

"Don't lie, Nance. Look if you're scared, why don't you just stay home and-"

"I might be pregnant," she blurted out suddenly, cutting him off. The

words he had intended to say vanished from his thoughts entirely. His eyes widened, and he stared at her, waiting for something else, some sort of confirmation that he had heard what he thought he did.

"What?"

"Im sorry, Johnathan," she sniffed, and he realized then that her eyes were starting to water. "I wanted to wait to tell you, but I knew how mad you'd be if I told you after going back to that awful place... If its true... It has to be yours."

"But Steve..."

"We haven't... Been together like that in awhile. I've had my cycle twice since the last time me and Steve..." Her cheeks flushed, and a tear slid down her cheek. She turned her face away from him. "Its late... This month..."

Johnathan didn't know a whole lot about women and their cycles. To be honest, it made him nervous to talk about or even think about. However, he knew what it meant when they didn't happen, and if Nancy was telling him the truth...

"You can't come," he told her sternly. "Nancy, you can't."

"Were supposed to do this together," she said, standing up from the bed. "Just like last time. I can't let you go in there alone. Especially now. I need you."

"I'll come back," he reassured her. "I won't let anything happen to me, but I also won't let anything happen to you. Look." He pulled his car keys from his pocket and held them out to her. "Drop me off at the PD. I'll ride with Hop, and you can drive over to Mikes and stay there with Will and Eleven. You can't come with me. Not now. Not after telling me that."

"Johnathan-"

"I won't let you," he reiterated, his eyebrows furrowing in concern. He stepped closer to her, taking her hands in his and pulling her closer to him. He squeezed her hands. "When I get back, I'm going to ask you to marry me. We'll get our own place, and we'll raise that baby to

the best of our ability. I won't risk losing either of you."

"I'm sorry," Nancy started to cry, letting her head fall forward and rest on his shoulder. "I'm so sorry. I hate it. I hate staying behind while you go back there. That place... Its awful. Its hell, Johnathan. You shouldn't be going without me."

"I have to. You might be carrying precious cargo, and you know how sick that place made Will. It wrecked him from the inside out. I won't let that happen to you." He let his hand fall to rest on her stomach, his thumb brushing over the fabric of her shirt. He smiled a little. "I won't let it happen to either of you."

"Okay," she nodded, sniffing in a deep breath. Nancy clung to him for a moment longer before leaning back and wiping her eyes with the back of her hands. "I'll stay behind, but... Promise me that if anything goes wrong, you'll grab Mike and get out of there. Nothing is worse losing you, especially not that assholes friend."

"I promise," he told her, leaning down to kiss her forehead. He hugged her again. "I can't believe it. I might be a father, and I get to be with you. I feel so lucky."

"Are you really going to ask me to marry you?"

"Are you going to say yes?"

"Maybe," she said with a playful smile. "I might."

"Guess I'll find out when I ask, won't I?" He chuckled. He kissed her once more, then slung his pack over his shoulder and started towards the front door. Nancy followed behind him, squeezing the car keys in her hands. "We better get going. Hopper made it clear he didn't want us being too late. He's going to teach me and the boys how to shoot."

"Good. You could use some lessons," she teased, and they left the house together. Nancy got in the drivers seat, then looked over at him. "Be safe and careful, Johnathan Beyers. You have a family to come home to now, so you better come home."

"I will," he nodded. "I swear." She nodded again, starting the car and heading down the driveway. She still hated that Johnathan wouldn't

let her go, but she knew it was likely to turn out that way. Nancy wished she could convince him to stay behind, but Johnathan wouldn't leave the others to face the monster alone. The more people they had on their side, the better their chances were.

Eleven got up from the bed when she heard a knock on the door. She walked into the living room, her bare feet padding against the wood floor as she made her way to the front door. Pausing to rub her tired eyes, she reached forward to pull it open. Will smiled from the other side.

"Hey, sorry for waking you up," he said when he realized she had been sleeping. He blushed a little when he realized she was wearing only a tee shirt, and he cleared his throat. "Mind if I come in and hang out? You can go back to bed."

Eleven stepped aside to let him enter, then walked into the kitchen to grab a glass and get some orange juice from the fridge. She looked back at him, then held up the bottle to offer some to him. He nodded and thanked her, so she poured him a glass and carried it over to him.

"Its okay," she said, pushing the front door closed behind him. "I'm glad you're here." She took a sip from her glass that she was gripping with two hands, then lowered it to look at Will. "Are you worried about them?"

"I am," he nodded. "I know what its like... To run and hide from that thing."

"They aren't going to hide."

"That's even worse, I think," he said with a slight scoff. "It makes me worry even more that they are trying to fight back. But what am I supposed to do? I'm useless to them."

"You're not useless. You're here to protect me."

"I think it may be the other way around, but thanks anyways," he smiled a little. "Want to watch a movie then or something?" Will

walked to the couch and flopped down, orange juice in hand. Eleven followed his lead and sat at the opposite end of the sofa.

"Yes," she nodded. He looked over at her, and he could see the fear in her eyes, the solemn fear that had settled in there. Will sighed, but he couldn't blame her. It made him sad, the whole situation, because it was hard to cheer someone up when he, too, was scared for the others.

Will had no idea what would happen, or how things would play out. He was worried, obviously, about someone getting hurt or worse. They were just kids, for the most part, just barely considered an adult to the people around them. He cleared his throat and put on a movie, hoping to distract Eleven and himself from worrying about what would happen while they were stuck at home, waiting on news from the others.

39. Chapter 39

Hey guys! Sorry again, as usual, about the wait. With college and everything, I'm trying to update as often as I can. My cat has been sick, too, but he's okay now so no worries! Next chapter is the last chapter in this story, and there will be a sequel coming out shortly after :) I hope you all have stuck around and put up with my late updates, and more than anything, ENJOY! Leave a little review if ya don't mind because I love getting them and I WANNA KNOW WHAT YOU ALL THINK IS GONNA HAPPEN NEXT CHAPTER :D

Chapter 39:

Nancy paced the living room of Mike's apartment, chewing away anxiously at her already short nails. They all had a reason to be anxious or scared. Will's brother and friends were there, Eleven's love and companions, and Nancy's now fiance, as well. They all had a lot to lose, and if there was ever a way to lose them all at once, it would be in the Upside Down.

It was a dark and malevolent place full of death and grime. Nothing there was kind or forgiving, and that was the place they were willingly heading into. She couldn't stand it. More than anything, she just wished she could have been there, fighting by Johnathan's side like they did when they were children. She took deep, ragged breaths, repeatedly checking the door in hopes they would just come burst in talking about their amazing victory.

"Worrying yourself to death isn't going to help anything," Will told her from the kitchen table where he and Eleven were sitting. He had made them both a bowl of cereal since El was hungry. Nancy refused to eat in favor of pacing. She looked over at the two of them, and she just shook her head. No one but Johnathan knew about her pregnancy. She hadn't been to a doctor yet, but she didn't figure it would hurt anyone to speak hypothetically.

"I might be pregnant," she blurted out, crossing her arms low over her stomach. Will's eyes widened, and Eleven just stared at her blankly.

After a moment, Eleven cocked her head to the side,

"What is pregnant?"

"It's... tough to explain," Nancy said, finally sitting down at the table with them. "When you're... intimate with someone..."

"Oh god, please don't," Will said, putting his hands over his ears. "He's my brother, Nancy." She shot him a glare, then rolled her eyes.

"If you're not careful when you're with someone like that, then what happens is... like a flower being planted, I guess, but instead of a flower, a baby grows in your stomach." It was the best she could think of in the moment, but Eleven seemed to understand. The younger girl looked down at her own stomach, then back up at Nancy.

"A baby? But... babies are so big."

"Your stomach grows, too. Large and round, to hold the baby." Nancy leaned forward on the table. "Now, Johnathan is the father of the baby I may have one day, and I need him to come back. A father and a mother are supposed to stay together. They raise the child together. I don't want this child to grow up never having met his dad." Eleven understood most of what she was saying. What she got from it was that Nancy was worried about Johnathan not returning, and Johnathan had to because he planted the seed to grow the flower.

"He will come home," Eleven reached across the table, laying her hand over Nancy's in an attempt to calm her down a little. "Your baby will know him." Nancy smiled a little, unable to help herself since El sounded so absolutely sure. She nodded towards the younger girl, then got up again, heading for the couch.

"Maybe a little TV will take my mind off of it," she said, flopping down on the couch and flipping through the channels. Eleven watched her for a moment, then laid her hand over her own stomach, trying to understand the idea of pregnant completely. It still seemed a little odd and far fetched to her. Painful, too, more than anything probably. She decided she would tell Mike they had to be careful, and she hoped he would know what that meant.

Eleven got up from the table, too, walking to the front window of the apartment, the one that looked out over the driveway. She pressed her palm against the glass, imaging in her head that Mike and the others would just drive right up, or walk even, as long as they returned. The waiting was agonizing, and not being able to help was even worse. Mike didn't want her help, and she understood why. Then again, she could just go in and take a peek, to make sure that Mike is doing okay. Eleven glanced back over her shoulder at Nancy and Will, who had joined her on the couch, then headed to the back bedroom.

"I want to sleep," she said as she disappeared behind the door. They both looking in her direction for a moment, but it didn't seem too odd to them. They turned back tot he TV and ignored it for the most part, figuring a nap would do Eleven some good.

Mike felt almost claustrophobic in the plastic helmet that covered his head. Looking through a thin piece of transparent material was annoying, too, since it fogged up a little with each breath he took. However, he didn't complain, not aloud, because he was just happy to get through to the gate without any issues. The people that ran the lab remembered Hopper's deal with them. He traded his silence for El a long time ago, and Mike had forgiven him for it after finding out. It was to save Will's life, and in the end, Brenner never got his hands on El anyways.

"Are you boys ready?" Hopper asked the young men standing before him. "This thing is nasty, you know that. Don't take off your helmets if you don't have to, and try not to touch anything." Mike, Johnathan, Dustin, Lucas, and Steve all nodded in understanding. Jesse stood there, eyes locked on the pulsing slime that covered the wall. It all seemed like bad horror movie, and he wished it wasn't real. He wished he was back home with Derek, hanging out on the couch and watching the game together. Jesse knew, though, that he would never get that again if he didn't brave the goo and go in there after his friend.

"Jesse!" Mike snapped his fingers in the other boy's ear. Jesse turned quickly, eyes a little wide and frightened. Mike could understand that. They were all a little scared, though most of them had dealt

with this kind of thing before. They had all faced the Demogorgon at one time or another, except Jesse. "Did you hear Hopper?" The straggler nodded.

"I'm ready."

"Alright, then let's get moving." Hopper slung his gun over his shoulder, then started towards the entrance. Mike followed close behind, and the rest fell in line. They all had something to lose, more than their own lives. Hawkins was turning into a dangerous place to live, and they had families and friends they needed to protect, some of them the same as others.

More than anything, Mike wanted to break the hold that the monsters and the Upside Down had on Eleven. He no longer wanted to be afraid of losing her again, of having her destroy herself to save him. That could never happen again, and it was worth risking his life for.

The stickiness was stomach-churning enough, but the smell was worse, Mike remembered. It was like hot death, like an animal corpse that had baked in the hot, summer sun for days before being scraped off the road by animal control. He was glad that they had hazmat suits this time to keep out the air. Stepping through the muck and goo was not picnic either. The sound of it squishing and sloshing under their feet caused all the young guys to have permanent expression of disgust as they made their way through the gate and into the dangerous Upside Down.

Hopper seemed not to notice it, or to ignore it, it seemed. Then again, he had been in that place before, and he knew what to expect already. Also, he was leading the pack, and it was important to keep his head on straight so they all believed everything was going smoothly. Johnathan sped up a little to walk beside Hopper.

"I brought gasoline," he said, reaching to pat the bookbag he had on his back. "Last time when we tried to kill it, it seemed to react to fire the most." Hopper looked down at him and nodded,

"You bring matches?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll help," Steve spoke up. Johnathan looked back at him. "I'll help you when you need it." Steve briefly thought back to when they were young, and the monster had come to the Beyers house while the three of them were there. In the face of danger, Steve had been brave, and they fought it off together. Those days were better, much better, Steve thought. He and Nancy were beginning their relationship, and he and Johnathan were friends. Johnathan offered him a half-hearted smile and a nod, then turned back to Hopper.

"Look, if one of those things comes crawling around, just stay close to me. This is a very powerful, very accurate weapon. You do not want to get in the way of it, so I need you boys not to go scattering around me." The boys all vocalized their understanding, then it fell silent between them. Jesse trailed at the back of the pack, eyes focused on the ground. He hadn't been given a weapon, because of his history, and he couldn't honestly blame them.

Hopper stopped all of a sudden, and the boys all looked to him for an explanation. Just ahead, as they quickly discovered, there was a body strewn across the ground, terribly decomposed and awfully torn up. They all make sounds of disgust, and some of them turned away.

"Well, I can guarantee that ain't your friend, kid," Hop said, glancing back at Jesse. "This poor son of a bitch has been here for awhile. Since the beginning, I'm guessing." Jesse felt a little guilty about feeling relief. It was sad, but all that mattered was finding Derek. He was like his brother, and he couldn't lose him, not like this. "Just move around him." They kept going, for what seemed like forever, venturing farther and farther into the Upside Down, eyes peeled for any missing people from Hawkins that might have somehow survived. They had little hope, but they knew it wasn't impossible.

"Wait," Mike stopped the group, having noticed movement off to the side. He pulled his flashlight from his belt and clicked it on, aiming it towards what he thought he saw. Behind a tree, there was a body slumped against it. Jesse pushed past Mike, breathing heavily as he looked at what Mike had seen. His eyes widened, and he took off running towards the body.

"Derek?!" Jesse called his friend's name a little too loud for Hopper's liking. they stuck close to each other as they headed towards Jesse.

The boy knelt down in front of the body slumped against the tree, and he immediately slapped it. "DEREK!" It stirred, much to everyone's surprise. "Jesus, Derek," Jesse breathed, shaking his friend. "Come on, you have to get up. You have to."

"My leg," Derek murmured softly, groggily. Jesse looked down, and Derek was right. There was an entire chunk of his calf missing, and the skin was torn and hanging loosely. Blood surrounded it, sticking out under the flashlight beam. Derek had tight a piece of cloth tightly around his thigh, which had slowed and eventually stopped the bleeding, but Derek wasn't far from dying.

"Come on, buddy, I'm getting you out of here," Jesse said, his voice shaky and desperate. Mike hurried to kneel down next to Jesse, and after a quick glance at one another, Jesse and Mike worked together to pick Derek up from the ground, using their shoulders to hold most of his weight.

"Hop, we can't stay in here too long. We need to go," Mike said, and as soon as the words left his lips, they all hear a low growl from the tree above them, the one that Derek had been slumped against. For a moment, they all just looked at each other, scared to look up and make it real. There was another growl, louder now, and the leaves rustled as a large grey mass leapt down from the tree.

"RUN!"

40. Chapter 40

Alright, so I know this update took longer than usual, for a few reasons. I got sick, bleh, for like... three days, then yesterday was Valentine's day so I spent it with my lovely love, River :) Annnnnd. I didn't want to update too soon, because it is the last chapter and after this, we move on to the sequel, and there will be a small time gap between the two, so I wanted to wait a little bit to give this to you guys :) But here it is. HAPPY (late) VALENTINES DAY AND ENJOY! Leave a little review :) let me know what you think.

Chapter 40:

Mike let out a light grunt as his back hit the solid ground. Something dark came flying down towards him, and he jerked to the side, leaving behind his helmet and flashlight as he scrambled up to his feet, his short black waves flying wildly around his face now. The same black limb that he barely managed to dodge before suddenly slammed into his back, sending him to the ground again, this time face down.

"Mike!" Dustin's voice cut through the growling over him. There was a shot, then the looming shadow over Mike retreated. Hopper came rushing to him, pulling him up by the elbow without wasting time to make sure he was okay. Mike looked around, once he was standing, at the mayhem they had walked into to rescue Jesse's asshole friend, his accomplish. What were they thinking?

Two Demogorgons, not just one, had attacked, and they were barely holding them back. Steve swung his bat, and Johnathan struggled to get a match lit among the chaos. They had already doused one of them with gasoline, though the can had also spilled on a variety of other things and people in the process. They were not prepared enough, and only the bullets from Hopper and Mike's guns were enough to even make the monsters hesitate or retreat at all.

"We need to get out of here," Mike told Hopper, panting heavily as the fear and panic rose in his chest. He didn't want to lose anyone,

not to these things. He'd lost El to them once, and he knew what happened after that. She had to live with them, running and hiding, starving, for seven years. No one, not even Jesse and Derek deserved something as awful as that.

"Head back to the lab!" Hopper yelled over the growling and frantic shouts. Jesse grabbed Derek, and Mike rushed to help him. They were practically carrying the injured boy behind the group, but it was almost impossible to keep up with the extra weight on their shoulders.

"You gotta leave me, man," Derek shook his head tiredly. "They'll catch us."

"I'm not gonna do that, and you know it," Jesse said through his teeth, trying to muster up his strength, every ounce of it, to push on as fast as he could while still holding onto Derek. He had to get him out of there. Derek needed him. "Wheeler, go ahead. You don't have to help me."

"If I don't, then you're both guaranteed to die," Mike frowned, struggling alongside him. The others were getting farther and farther ahead, and Mike's legs were already almost too exhausted to keep carrying him. "Just hold on. We can do it." The growling was getting louder, closer and closer to them as the group got ahead and they slowed down. Hopper turned around, pausing for a moment but urging the rest of them to go.

"Wheeler, come on!"

"I'm trying!" Mike yelled back, gritting his teeth and pulling with all of his might. Just as he thought he was about to lose his hold on Derek, his ankle was yanked out from under him, and he was dragged backwards through the leaves and mud. Derek and Jesse both collapsed as their third leg was yanked away from them, but Jesse immediately went scrambling after Mike.

Will and Nancy could hardly sit still for hours since the others left, but finally, Nancy managed to doze off against the arm of the couch. Will threw a blanket over her, then sat back against the opposite arm,

focusing intently on the program playing on the television to keep his mind off of the things he knew were going on.

After several minutes of silence, Will found himself struggling not to doze off. They had both worn themselves out by worrying, and he was drifting in and out of consciousness. His dreams for quiet for once, and he wanted so desperately to give into that peaceful sleep.

Suddenly the sound of bare feet plodding against the tile woke him. Will sat up quickly to see Eleven fly out of the door, leaving wide open and swinging slightly behind her.

"Eleven, don't!" Will shouted loudly,, pushing himself up too fast and getting dizzy in the process. He stumbled back against the couch, his hand flying up to his forehead. "Eleven, no..." He groaned in frustration, feeling like he failed Mike.

"No, no, no," Jesse panted, trying to catch up. Mike grabbed his pistol, turned, and shot upwards, barely clipping the Demogorgon's shoulder. He tried to shoot again, but the gun just clicked. The magazine was empty, and Mike had nothing left to rescue himself. More shots rang out from behind them, probably from Hop, and Jesse was still shouting after Mike, though his voice was growing increasingly faint.

"MIKE!" A new voice cut through the chaos, a voice he hoped never to hear in that awful place again. The Demogorgon stopped, growling lowly and looking around, which gave Mike an opportunity to look around, too. A barefooted, brown haired girl came running towards him, and Mike's panic only grew.

"El? Eleven, no! Go away! Get out of here!" He couldn't do this again. He couldn't watch her give up everything to save him because he was incapable of doing it himself. As she approached, the monster snarled loudly, releasing Mike and backing away slowly. Suddenly, it flew backwards, far backwards, and Eleven was on her knees at Mike's side. "El, what're you doing here? You promised!"

"I saw it attack," she explained. "I had to come. I had to save you."

"I wanted to save you," he frowned up at her, raising a hand to her cheek. "Come on, we have to go. There's probably more of those things out there, El. You can't take them all." He pushed himself up to his feet, then grabbed Eleven by the hand. "We need to run." He started in the opposite direction, dragging her along behind him.

Eleven turned to see one of them emerging from the dark, running full force towards them. With another sharp and painful mental focus, Eleven threw it back again, wanting to buy them more time. Mike jerked her arm.

"El, please," he begged, "dont." Using her powers to save them was risking losing her life, and Mike wouldn't let her make that sacrifice again. He couldn't stand it. He was in love with her, with every ounce of his short heart, mind, and body utterly devoted to her.

Eleven knew what Mike feared, but her own desire to save Mike would undoubtedly clash with his fear. She couldn't stand to lose him either, and she had the power to do something about it, to rescue him, and that was what saved and he intended to do, no matter the cost she would have to pay, as long as he was safe.

Hopper was glad when they finally caught up, and the gate wasn't far off now. Johnathan and Steve worked together to create a line of gasoline and light it on fire, hopefully buying them some time since the monsters had an inherent fear of fire. Maybe it could deter them. Hopper periodically shot bullets at them, almost always hitting one of them somewhere. The goal wasn't to kill them anymore, but to hold them back long enough to escape.

Their snarls and growls and the whipping of their claws slashing through air sent adrenaline pumping through everyone's veins. They were scared, if not for themselves then for the loved ones who travelled into the Upside Down with them. Mike hadn't been as terrified as he was in that moment since the first time he lost Eleven.

"There!" Lucas shouting, pointing up ahead. He gathered his strength, and pushed on with a burst of speed, reaching the gate first and turning to encourage the others to hurry. "Let's go, let's go!" He shouted at them frantically, and they all began pushing a little harder, desperate to escape. Death lurked ominously behind them,

and life, tortured them just up ahead.

Dustin reached the gate second, shoving Lucas through forcefully ahead and taking his place. Jesse hoisted Derek up to it, and Dustin helped to pull the injured boy through. Steve aheadnd Johnathan went through next, then Hopper. Just before Eleven could get through, a Demogorgon snatched her by her dress, yanking her hard to the side and throwing her to the ground.

"Eleven!" Mike cried out, rushing to her aid, but being met with a slash of claws across his chest. Mike gasped loudly and fell back, groaning in pain but trying to fight through it to save Eleven. He watched on in horror as they circled her like prey, all inching closer slowly

One flew back, hitting a tree and letting out an animalistic yelp. Blood dripped from her nostril, and she grew pale. One of them finally pounced on her bravely, grabbing her by the shoulders and pinning her down. She screamed, both in pain and fear, turning her face away from its unwinding jaws. Before it could bite down, a shot rang out, and the monsters circling Eleven scattered for the moment. Arms scooped underneath Mike's arms, but he didnt bother to look at his rescuer. He stayed focused on Eleven.

"I'm not letting you die for us," Jesse's voice came from behind him, as Mike was dragged towards the gate. Hopper ran to Eleven, shooting off a few more rounds before grabbing her parents and rushing to the gate. Finally, they all were there, and they all made it through, successfully having saved Derek during their trip so it wasn't for nothing.

Mike sat up from the ground as Eleven rushed to him, taking his face in her trembling hands and kissing his hard as she cried.

"Mike," she sobbed. "Mike I'm sorry." He wrapped his arms around her, drawing her closer, holding her as tight as he could without causing an unbearable amount of pain to his fresh wounds. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry..."

"Sh, sh, El, it's alright now. It's okay." He kissed her forehead. "We're going home."

"I'm afraid you're sadly mistaken," a man spoke from the hallway, gaining all of their attention at once. Men with larger guns stood behind this man they didn't recognize. Hopper stepped forward.

"What're you talking about? We're walking out of here right now."

"I'm afraid you may have all been exposed to a highly contagious, incredibly dangerous virus after being exposed to... a new species of fungus," the man said calmly. He motioned towards his men to do something, and they started towards the group. "At least that is what your families will be told. You should have never returned."

One of the men hit Hopper from behind, the rest moving to grab each individual member of the group. Two of them grabbed Eleven by her wrists, and she immediately forced them back, clinging to Mike.

"No, no!" She yelled, but her protesting was instantly stopped by a loud pitched whine that immediately debilitated her. The man leading the armed men held up a familiar silver cylinder. "Mike!" She cried, curling up in a ball on the ground, her hands flying up to cover her ears. "Mike! Help me!"

He had never felt so helpless. Mike tried to push himself to his feet, towards her, but was grabbed by men like all the others.

"Eleven, I won't let them hurt you!" He promised her. "I'll get you out here, El, I swear!" Tears of panic and fear fell freely down his cheeks, and he turned to his so many of his friends struggling, but failing to stop from being detained.

"You'll be safe here, under our care, don't you worry." The man looked to the armed men. "Take them to their rooms. Tie them down. Be extra careful with the girl."

Mike watched in agony as Eleven was dragged up by her elbows, lifted from the ground, then carried away, down the hall. He wondered in that moment if that was going to be the last time he ever saw her, whether it was because they held her prisoner, or because they killed him. The blood loss kicked in as the adrenaline wore off, and he faded from consciousness.

kind of a cliffhanger end, but you wouldn't be lying in wait without one XD I just wanted to say... thank you guys from the bottom of my heart. The journey with this story has short been amazing, and I was lucky to have such amazing making readers throughout :) I love you guys and thanks so much. I hope to see you all soon in the sequel.

41. Chapter 41

A/N: The sequel to After All This Time is out now :) the first chapter anyways. It's called "It's Still You" and I'm sure you'll be able to find it. I'm so excited to continue the journey with you guys! Can't wait for more! Love y'all!